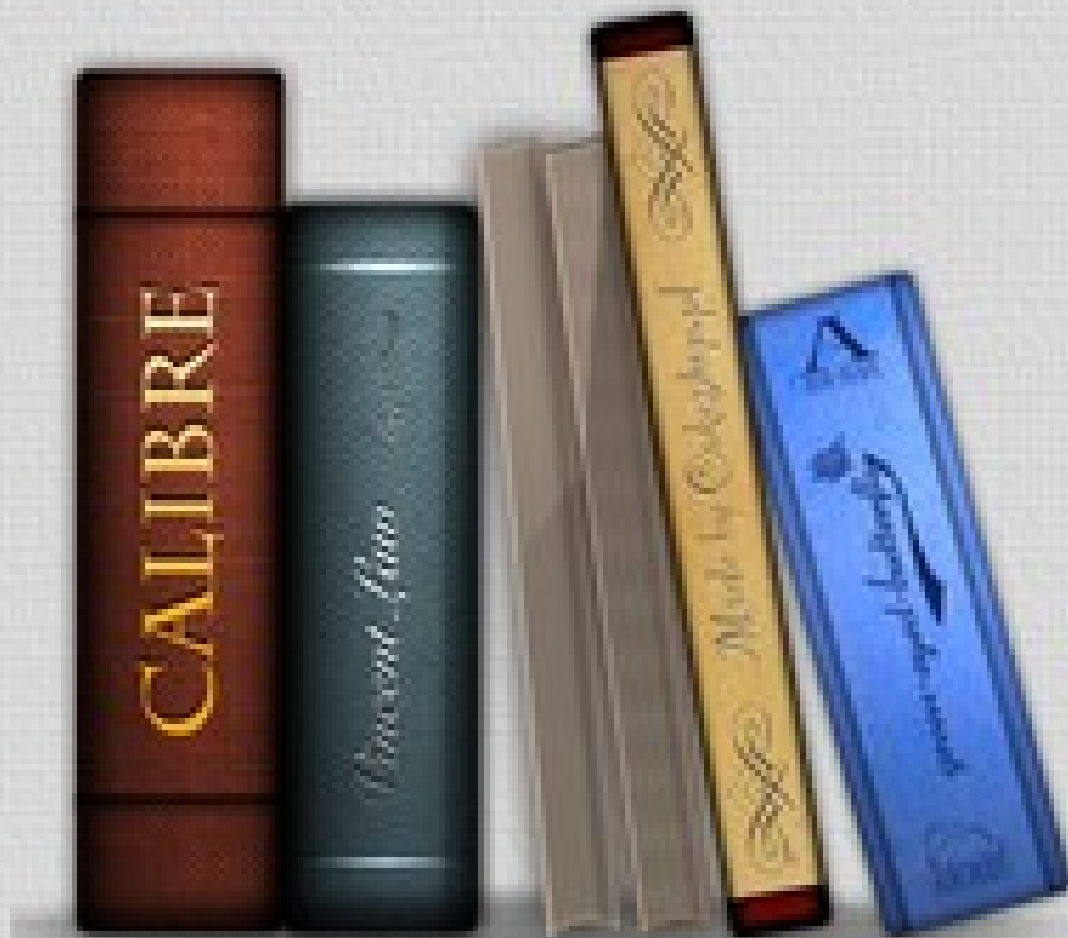


DGuzik 07 Judges

David Guzik

Book 7 of Bible Commentary: David
Guzik



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After Joshua died, the Israelites asked the LORD,

“Who should lead the invasion against the Canaanites and launch the attack?”

Guzik - Judges 1:1-36

Judges 1 - Victory and Defeat in the Promised

Land

A. Continuing victory in Israel.

1. (1a) After the death of Joshua.

Now after the death of Joshua

a. **After the death of Joshua:** In this period Israel lost a critical link in its godly leadership.

Moses had been the great leader used by God

to bring them out of Egypt; Joshua had been

Moses' assistant, and the great leader used by God to bring them into the land of promise. But Joshua had no assistant that he could appoint to lead the whole nation. They were in a critical place where they had to trust God more intimately than they ever had before.

i. God gives wonderful human leaders to His

work on this earth, and it is always difficult for God's people when those human leaders

pass from the scene. In such a situation, we may live in the past, wishing that leader

were still with us.

b. **After the death of Joshua:** During this period of the judges (which lasted some 340

years), there was no standing "office" of national leadership. Israel had no king, no

president, no prime minister on earth - only God in heaven. And at the necessary and

appropriate time, God would bring forth a leader for nation who would pretty much rise up, do his (or her) job, and then move on back to their obscurity. This required that Israel have a real, abiding trust in God.

i. These national deliverers were not elected, and they didn't come to leadership through

succession - they were specially gifted by God for leadership in their times, and the

people of God recognized and respected that gifting.

ii. When this book uses the term *judge*, it doesn't mean someone who sits in a court and decides legal issues; the Hebrew word *shaphat* has more the idea of a *heroic leader*.

iii. They had formidable obstacles - they were surrounded by people who lived in the most terrible immorality and idolatry; there were constant dangers to their walking with God. The lives of the Canaanites who lived around Israel were focused mainly on three things: money, sex, and having a relationship with God on *my* terms instead of *God's* terms.

c. **After the death of Joshua:** The book of Judges shows us a time that is sometimes confusing, difficult, and dark. For this reason, many have neglected the book of Judges, and regarded this period of time as a "dark ages" of Israel's history. But if we neglect this book, we neglect a wonderful account of the love and graciousness of God, and how He lovingly corrects His people.

i. What we find out about *man* in Judges is depressing; but what we find out about *God* in Judges is spectacular.

2. (1b-2) After Joshua's death, Israel seeks the LORD.

It came to pass that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, "Who shall be first to go up for us against the Canaanites to fight against them?"

And the LORD said, "Judah shall go up. Indeed I have delivered the land into his hand."

a. **The children of Israel asked the LORD:** Here, they do the *right* thing - the thing Joshua would have wanted them to do. With Joshua gone, they are not left without a leader; they are simply called to a new trust in God.

b. **And the LORD said:** When Israel sought the LORD, He guided them. Jesus said the same in Luk. 11:9 - *So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.* Often when we think the LORD isn't answering us, it is really more of a matter of Him speaking in a way we wouldn't expect Him to.

c. **Judah shall go up:** God directs that the tribe of Judah - the tribe the Messiah would come from - would lead the way.

i. Under Joshua, Israel had broken the back of the Canaanite's military strength; yet it remained for each individual tribe to actually go in and possess what God had given them.

3. (3-7) Judah (with the tribe of Simeon) defeats Bezek and their king.

So Judah said to Simeon his brother, "Come up with me to my allotted territory, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I will likewise go with you to your allotted territory." And Simeon went with him. Then Judah went up, and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand; and they killed ten thousand men at Bezek. And they found Adoni-Bezek in Bezek, and fought against him; and they defeated the Canaanites and the Perizzites. Then Adoni-Bezek fled, and they pursued him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and big toes.

And Adoni-Bezek said, "Seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off used to gather *scraps* under my table; as I have done, so God has repaid me." Then they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.

a. **Judah said to Simeon his brother,**

"Come up with me" : Judah is walking wisely; by partnering with another tribe, the work is much easier. Here, the tribes are functioning like God wants the church to function - as a body, with each part of the body helping out other parts of the body.

b. **The LORD delivered the Canaanites and**

the Perizzites into their hand: Seeking the LORD, obeying His guidance, and working together as a body always produces great results: **the LORD delivered** all their enemies into their hands.

c. **They killed the thousand men at Bezek:** This place where the conquered was called

Bezek; and the leader of this city was **Adoni-Bezek**, which means "Lord of Lightning" - a fearful name, but Judah and Simeon defeated him none the less.

i. Their punishment of him may seem cruel, but realize that it is justice in its truest sense - he had done this same thing to **seventy kings**, now he has his own toes and fingers cut off.

ii. The punishment made Adoni-Bezek worthless as a warrior; he could trouble Israel no more as a military man. "It was a custom among those Romans who did not like a military life, to cut off their own thumbs, that they might not be called into the army. Sometimes the parents cut off the thumbs of their children, that they might not be called into the army." (Clarke).

iii. We also see Judah and Simeon being unselfish; they are fighting a battle in a territory that did not directly belong to them.

The city of Bezek was far to the north of Judah's tribal lands.

4. (8-20) Judah's victories in the southern part of the land given to Israel.

Now the children of Judah fought against Jerusalem and took it; they struck it with the edge of the sword and set the city on fire. And afterward the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites who dwelt in the mountains, in the South, and in the lowland.

Then Judah went against the Canaanites who

dwelt in Hebron. (Now the name of Hebron *was* formerly Kirjath Arba.) And they killed Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi. From there they went against the inhabitants of Debir. (The name of Debir *was* formerly Kirjath Sepher.) Then Caleb said, "Whoever attacks Kirjath Sepher and takes it, to him I will give my daughter Achsah as wife."

And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it; so he gave him his daughter Achsah as wife. Now it happened, when she came *to him*, that she urged him to ask her father for a field. And she dismounted from *her* donkey, and Caleb said to her, "What do you wish?" So she said to him, "Give me a blessing; since you have given me land in the South, give me also springs of water." And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs. Now the children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up from the City of Palms with the children of Judah into the Wilderness of Judah, which *lies* in the South *near* Arad; and they went and dwelt among the people. And Judah went with his brother Simeon, and they attacked the

Canaanites who inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. So the name of the city was called Hormah. Also Judah took Gaza with its territory, Ashkelon with its territory, and Ekron with its territory. So the LORD was with Judah. And they drove out the mountaineers, but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the lowland, because they had chariots of iron. And they gave Hebron to Caleb, as Moses had said. Then he expelled from there the three sons of Anak.

a. Judah fought against Jerusalem and

took it: Jerusalem falls to Judah; it was occupied for a time (Adoni-Bezek was taken there and died there), but it later fell back to the Jebusites (see Jdg. 1:21). David re-conquered the city some 400 years later (2Sa.

5:6-10).

b. Then Judah went against the

Canaanites who dwelt in Hebron: Judah also conquers Hebron, and it is given to faithful Caleb and his family (see Jos. 15:13-19).

i. Hebron was the ancient city of Abraham, and the city which discouraged the ten unfaithful spies from taking the promised land in Moses' day, because of the Anakim which lived there (Num. 13:22-23).

c. **Give me a blessing:** Spurgeon has a wonderful sermon on verses 12-15 ("Aschsah's Asking, A Pattern of Prayer"); he shows how the request from a daughter (Aschsah) to a father (Caleb) gives us a "parable of prayer."

i. She thought about what she wanted before she went to her father. Before you pray, know what you need before God. She came to God with a very definite request, that had been considered before hand.

"Think what you are going to ask before you begin to pray, and then pray like business

men. This woman does not say to her father, 'Father, listen to me,' and then utter some pretty little oration about nothing; but she knows what she is going to ask for, and why she is going to ask it." (Spurgeon) ii. She asked for help with her request,

asking her husband - **she urged him to**

ask her father for a field. "A friend, some time ago, said to me, 'My dear pastor,

whenever I cannot pray for myself, and there are times when I feel shut up about myself, I always take to praying for you:

'God bless him, at any rate!' and I have not long been praying for you before I begin to

feel able to pray for myself.' I should like to come in for many of those odd bits of

prayer. Whenever any of you get stuck in the mud, do pray for me. It will do you

good, and I shall get a blessing." (Spurgeon) iii. She knew it was her *father* she asked.

iv. She went humbly, yet eagerly.

v. Her father asked her what she wanted - God will ask us the same thing, and we should know what we want.

vi. You should actually ask for it; it is a pleasure for God to hear you ask.

vii. Her prayer: **give me a blessing**.

viii. She mingled gratitude with her petition (**you have given me land in the South**).

ix. She used past blessing as a reason to ask for more.

x. She realized that what she had been given before was of no use without continual springs of water. "What is the use of the hearers if there be not the power of the Holy Spirit going with the Word to bless them? Give me springs of water." (Spurgeon)

xi. Her father gave her what she asked.

xii. Her father gave to her in large measure.

xiii. Her father was not critical of the request in the slightest way.

d. **The city of Palms**: This is Jericho; the Kenites went from there to **Arad**, a city out in the Judean wilderness, west of Masada and the Dead Sea; **Zephath** isn't too far from there; **Gaza** and **Ashkelon** were out towards the coast and later became Philistine strongholds.

e. **They had chariots of iron**: As impressive as Judah's victory was, it was incomplete; they could not win over nations that had the latest military technology: **chariots of iron**.

i. Of course, this spoke more to Judah's lack of full trust in God than it did to Canaanite military superiority. Chariots were not problem for God's people when they were trusting God (Exo. 14:7-29; Jos. 11:1-8; 1Ki.

20:21); their attitude should have been like in Psa. 20:7 - *Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; But we will*

remember the name of the LORD our God.

ii. They believed one promise of God, and not another. They believed that God was with them in the hills, but not in the lowlands. Many believers find it easy to believe one area of God's promises, but not another.

B. Incomplete victory and defeat.

1. (21) The tribe of Benjamin does not take possession of Jerusalem.

But the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem; so the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day.

a. **The children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites:** This is a case where the battle had already been won (Jdg. 1:8). They just had to enter into what was theirs. It would take effort, to be certain, but the battle was over. Jerusalem belonged to them.

2. (22-26) The house of Joseph (the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh) take the city of Bethel.

And the house of Joseph also went up against Bethel, and the LORD *was* with them. So the house of Joseph sent men to spy out Bethel. (The name of the city *was* formerly Luz.) And when the spies saw a man coming out of the city, they said to him, "Please show us the entrance to the city, and we will show you mercy." So he showed them the entrance to the city, and they struck the city with the edge of the sword; but they let the man and all his family go. And the man went to the land of the Hittites, built a city, and called its name Luz, which *is* its name to this day.

a. **And the LORD was with them:** We might credit the victory to their effective use of military espionage; but the real reason was because **the LORD was with them.**

3. (27-29) Ephraim and Manasseh fail to drive out all the Canaanites.

However, Manasseh did not drive out *the inhabitants of* Beth Shean and its villages, or Taanach and its villages, or the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, or the inhabitants of Ibleam and its villages, or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages; for the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land. And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites under tribute, but did not completely drive them out. Nor did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer; so the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them.

a. The Canaanites were determined to

dwell in the land: At first, there were pockets of Canaanites that these tribes were unable to push out of the land. But when the tribes eventually grew strong enough, they

compromised with those Canaanites and thought they could use them to their advantage (**they put the Canaanites under tribute**).

b. Did not completely drive them out: In the same way, when someone first begins their Christian life, they may not be strong enough in the **LORD** to deal with all the things they see that need changing; yet as they grow in the **LORD**, they must not slack in dealing with those areas. We are to never make a peace treaty with sin.

4. (30) The tribe of Zebulun compromises and accommodates the Canaanites, putting them under tribute. Nor did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron or the inhabitants of Nahalol; so the Canaanites dwelt among them, and were put under tribute.

5. (31-32) The tribe of Asher fails in taking full possession of their land.

Nor did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Acco or the inhabitants of Sidon, or of Ahlab, Achzib, Helbah, Aphik, or Rehob. So the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; for they did not drive them out.

6. (33) The tribe of Naphtali compromises and accommodates the Canaanites, putting them under tribute. Nor did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh or the inhabitants of Beth Anath; but they dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land. Nevertheless the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh and Beth Anath were put under tribute to them.

7. (34-36) The tribe of Dan fails in taking full possession of their land.

And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountains, for they would not allow them to come down to the valley; and the Amorites were determined to dwell in Mount Heres, in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim; yet when the strength of the house of Joseph became greater, they were put under tribute. Now the boundary of the Amorites *was* from the Ascent of Akrabbim, from Sela, and upward.

a. **The Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountains:** Here, we see the people of God being pushed around by their enemies; this should never be the case when God's people are walking in the strength God has for them.

b. **When the strength of the house of Joseph became greater, they were put under tribute:** Again, instead of doing what God said should be done with these enemies (completely drive them out), they decide they will use them as *they* think best - putting these enemies under tribute.

c. **The boundary of the Amorites:** Finally, the Amorites have an appointed boundary within the inheritance of God's people; we should never accommodate our spiritual enemies in this way.

d. Lessons from Israel's incomplete occupation of what God intended for them.

i. Essentially, the question is: what will we be satisfied with in our Christian life? For Israel, in Judges 1, they were

satisfied with far less than what God wanted them to have, and far less than what God had provided for them.

ii. These Israelites didn't say "let's forsake God"; they simply decided that they would be satisfied with less. Once we satisfy ourselves with less than God's best for us, we will never be what God wants us to be.

© 2003 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** The LORD said, "The men of Judah should take the lead. Be sure of this! I am handing the land over to them."

3 The men of Judah said to their relatives, the men of Simeon, "Invade our allotted land with us and help us attack the Canaanites. Then we will go with you into your allotted land." So the men of Simeon went with them.

4 The men of Judah attacked, and the LORD handed the Canaanites and Perizzites over to them. They killed ten thousand men at Bezek. **5** They met Adoni-Bezek at Bezek and fought him. They defeated the Canaanites and Perizzites. **6** When Adoni-Bezek ran away, they chased him and captured him. Then they cut off his thumbs and big toes. **7** Adoni-Bezek said, "Seventy kings, with thumbs and big toes cut off, used to lick up food scraps under my table. God has repaid me for what I did to them." They brought him to Jerusalem, where he died. **8** The men of Judah attacked Jerusalem and captured it. They put the sword to it and set the city on fire.

9 Later the men of Judah went down to attack the Canaanites living in the hill country, the Negev, and the lowlands. **10** The men of Judah attacked the Canaanites living in Hebron. (Hebron used to be called Kiriath Arba.) They killed Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai. **11** From there they attacked the people of Debir. (Debir used to be called Kiriath Sepher.) **12** Caleb said, "To the man who attacks and captures Kiriath Sepher I will give my daughter Acsah as a wife." **13** When Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger

brother, captured it, Caleb gave him his daughter Acsah as a wife.

14 One time Acsah came and charmed her father so she could ask him for some land. When she got down from her donkey, Caleb said to her, "What would you like?" **15** She answered, "Please give me a special present. Since you have given me land in the Negev, now give me springs of water." So Caleb gave her both the upper and lower springs.

16 Now the descendants of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up with the people of Judah from the City of Date Palm Trees to Arad in the desert of Judah, located in the Negev. They went and lived with the people of Judah.

17 The men of Judah went with their brothers the men of Simeon and defeated the Canaanites living in Zephath. They wiped out Zephath. So people now call the city Hormah. **18** The men of Judah captured Gaza, Ashkelon, Ekron, and the territory surrounding each of these cities.

19 The LORD was with the men of Judah. They conquered the hill country, but they could not conquer the people living in the coastal plain, because they had chariots with iron-rimmed wheels. **20** Caleb received Hebron, just as Moses had promised. He drove out the three Anakites. **21** The men of Benjamin, however, did not conquer the Jebusites living in Jerusalem. The Jebusites live with the people of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this very day.

22 When the men of Joseph attacked Bethel, the LORD was with them. **23** When the men of Joseph spied out Bethel (it used to be called Luz), **24** the spies spotted a man leaving the city. They said to him, "If you show us a secret entrance into the city, we will reward you." **25** He showed them a secret entrance into the city, and they put the city to the sword. But they let the man and his extended family leave safely. **26** He moved to Hittite country and built a city. He named it Luz, and it has kept that name to this very day.

27 The men of Manasseh did not conquer Beth Shan, Taanach, or their surrounding towns. Nor did they conquer

the people living in Dor, Ibleam, Megiddo or their surrounding towns. The Canaanites managed to remain in those areas. **28** Whenever Israel was strong militarily, they forced the Canaanites to do hard labor, but they never totally conquered them.

29 The men of Ephraim did not conquer the Canaanites living in Gezer. The Canaanites lived among them in Gezer.

30 The men of Zebulun did not conquer the people living in Kitron and Nahalol. The Canaanites lived among them and were forced to do hard labor.

31 The men of Asher did not conquer the people living in Acco or Sidon, nor did they conquer Ahlab, Aczib, Helbah, Aphek, or Rehob. **32** The people of Asher live among the Canaanites residing in the land because they did not conquer them.

33 The men of Naphtali did not conquer the people living in Beth Shemesh or Beth Anath. They live among the Canaanites residing in the land. The Canaanites living in Beth Shemesh and Beth Anath were forced to do hard labor for them.

34 The Amorites forced the people of Dan to live in the hill country. They did not allow them to live in the coastal plain.

35 The Amorites managed to remain in Har Heres, Aijalon, and Shaalbim. Whenever the tribe of Joseph was strong militarily, the Amorites were forced to do hard labor. **36** The border of Amorite territory ran from the Scorpion Ascent to Sela and on up.

1 The LORD's angelic messenger went up from Gilgal to Bokim. He said, "I brought you up from Egypt and led you into the land I had solemnly promised to give to your ancestors. I said, 'I will never break my agreement with you, Guzik - Judges 2:1-23

Judges 2 - From Victory to Weeping

A. From Gilgal (a place of victory) to Bochim (a place of weeping).

1. (1-3) The Angel of the LORD preaches to Israel.

Then the Angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said: "I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you. And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.' But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this?

Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be *thorns* in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you.'"

a. **The Angel of the LORD**: This person here is clearly God Himself, appearing in a human form - Jesus Christ appearing to the people of Israel before His incarnation in Bethlehem.

i. We know this is Jesus for two reasons:

first, because the **Angel of the LORD** here claims divinity by saying that He is the one who led Israel up from Egypt, made a covenant with Israel, and personally called

Israel to obedience. Second, because this person, appearing in human form before

Israel, cannot be the Father, because the

Father is described as *invisible* (1Ti. 1:17) and *whom no man has seen or can see* (1Ti.

6:16).

ii. The idea of Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity, appearing as a man before

Bethlehem is provocative, but logical - we

know that He *existed* before Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2); why should He *not*, on isolated but important occasions, appear in bodily form? (see also passages like Gen. 18:16-

33; 32:24-30; Jdg. 13:1-23).

iii. "Not in such a body as God had prepared for him when he took upon himself the form

of a servant, but in such a form and fashion as seemed most congruous to his divine

majesty, and to the circumstances of those

he visited, this angel of the divine covenant whom we delight in came and spoke unto this people." (Spurgeon)

b. I led you up from Egypt and brought

you to the land: The first thing Jesus does is remind Israel of His great love and faithfulness to them. He has delivered them from Egypt's bondage; He has given them an abundant land

of promise; He has given them a covenant that He will never, ever, break.

i. Before God ever calls us to obedience or confronts our sin, He reminds us of His great love and faithfulness to us. We can only obey Him when we are walking in His love, and abiding in His covenant with us.

ii. Even though Israel never fully lived up to their end of the covenant, God promised that He would never forsake His end of the covenant.

c. You have not obeyed My voice. Why

have you done this? Jesus confronts Israel in love. The question is stinging in its simplicity; there is never a good reason for our disobedience.

i. Israel's real problem was not one of military power or technology; it was a spiritual problem. "The deplorable spiritual condition of the Israelites, not their lack of chariots, lay behind their failure to dispossess the Canaanites." (Wolf)

d. I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be thorns in your side: Jesus announces that He will allow the work of possessing the land to go unfinished, as a means of correction to a disobedient Israel. If they had thought that God would do it all for them anyway, they were wrong.

i. God is forever finished judging the Christian. All the punishment you or I ever

deserved was put upon Jesus at Calvary.

Yet, we punish ourselves by settling for less than what God has for us, and God will allow us to experience the bitter harvest of settling for less than His best.

ii. We often wish that God would do the work of Christian maturity for us; that we would wake up one morning and a certain besetting sin will just be gone. Sometimes God grants such a miraculous deliverance, and we praise Him for it. But more commonly, He requires our partnership with Him in the process of Christian growth. Our partnership is important to God because it shows that our heart is where His heart is; that we are truly growing close to God.

e. They shall be thorns in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you: The announcement that these people would remain as problems to the nation was promised beforehand to Israel if they would not faithfully drive out the Canaanites.

i. *But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall be that those whom you let remain shall be irritants in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall harass you in the land where you dwell.* (Num. 33:55) 2. (4-6) The people respond with weeping and sorrow. So it was, when the Angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voices and wept. Then they called the name of that place Bochim; and they sacrificed there to the LORD. And when Joshua had dismissed the people, the children of Israel went each to his own inheritance to possess the land.

a. The people lifted up their voices and wept: The response of the people, with all its emotion, was very hopeful. With all the weeping and wailing, there was

reason to believe that God's word had really struck them, and they were on their way to a wonderful revival of God's work in their midst. But it was not the case.

i. Real repentance shows itself in action, not in necessarily in weeping. We can be sorry

about the consequences of our sin without being sorry about the sin itself.

ii. You can weep and outwardly show repentance without ever inwardly repenting.

This is why the **LORD** challenges Israel in Joe. 2:13: *So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness.*

iii. It is wonderful indeed to see people truly weeping over their sin, and Christians should never discourage that. However, "the tear is the natural drop of moisture, and soon evaporates; the better thing is the inward torrent of grief within the soul, which leaves the indelible mark within. . . . One grain of faith is better than a gallon of tears. A drop of genuine repentance is more precious than a torrent of weeping." (Spurgeon)

b. **They sacrificed there to the LORD:** They did the right thing; any awareness of sin should drive us to God's appointed sacrifice. In their day, that meant sin offerings of bulls and rams; in our day, it means remembering God's sacrifice for us on the cross.

3. (7-10) The new generation in Israel.

So the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who

outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD which He had done for Israel.

Now Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died *when he was* one hundred and ten years old. And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Heres, in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of

Mount Gaash. When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel.

a. **So the people served the LORD all the**

days of Joshua: Joshua's legacy is seen in the godliness of Israel during his leadership; he is truly one of history's great men of God.

i. **The servant of the LORD** as a title for Joshua really means something; it is a title applied only to great men of God like Moses (Deu. 34:5) and David (Psa. 18:1, title), and the courageous prophets (2Ki. 9:7).

b. **And all the days of the elders who**

outlived Joshua: Israel was also faithful to God in the days of Joshua's immediate

successors. But afterward, there arose a generation who had *not* **seen all the great works of the LORD which He had done for Israel.**

c. **Another generation arose after them**

who did not know the LORD nor the work

which He had done for Israel: The new generation had no personal relationship with God, and no personal awareness of His power.

God was someone who their parents related to, and did things for their parent's generation.

i. True Christianity is not biologically transmitted; it must be caught by each new generation, by the new generation having their *own* personal relationship with God and seeing His works on their behalf.

B. A summary of Israel's history during the time of the Judges.

1. (11-13) Israel falls into idolatry.

Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals; and they

forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from *among* the gods of the people who *were* all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger. They forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtoreths.

a. **The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD:** Even in the days of Joshua, Israel did not fully possess what they could have in the promised land. But they remained faithful to God, and they did not worship the idolatrous gods of the Canaanites.

But after Joshua's passing, they fall into the worship of these grotesque gods.

i. Why would anyone want to trade a personal, real, living God for a false god that is the figment of man's imagination?

Because there is something within us that is afraid of the exact God we need; we would rather serve a god of our own creating than a real, living God we can't control. The gods we create are the gods we want in our own flesh.

b. **And served the Baals:** What was the attraction of **Baal** worship? Baal was the god over the weather and nature for the Canaanites; he was essentially the agricultural god. In an agricultural society, people served Baal because they wanted good weather for abundant crops and flocks; the bottom line with Baal *was* the bottom line - personal wealth.

i. "There were also 'Baals' associated with particular places, like the Ball of Peor (Num.

25:3) or Baal-Berith (Jdg. 9:4); and this may account for the plural form." (Wolf)

c. **They forsook the LORD and served Baal**

and the Ashtoreths: What was the attraction of **Ashtoreth** worship? Ashtoreth was the Canaanite goddess of love, sex, and fertility; she was usually "worshipped" by

having sex with a "priestess" who was a prostitute. The bottom line with Ashtoreth was sex, love, and romance.

d. **They forsook the LORD:** God makes it clear that Israel's going after these gods was nothing less than forsaking **the LORD God of their fathers**. Yet, in all likelihood, Israel did not see their idolatry as *forsaking* God, they probably just thought they were adding a few gods along side of the God of their fathers - but we serve a very jealous God, who demands exclusive worship.

i. God isn't just something we add to our lives; He wants to become our life. And He will not have us adding other gods to our lives.

ii. We are said to be in a marriage type relationship with God, and we are not allowed to say "Well, I love you, but let me also add this lover and that lover. I can love you all!" God wants one spouse to meet all our marital needs; and He is the one God who can meet all our needs.

e. **In the sight of the LORD:** This implies that the sin was even more offensive to God. To give an extreme example, it is bad enough for a married person to commit adultery - but to

commit adultery before the very eyes of one's spouse would be especially offensive. It is awesome to consider that all of our sin is done right before the eyes of God.

f. **They followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them:**

This shows another root cause for Israel's tragic idolatry. The influence of the Canaanites that they allowed to remain in their midst led them to idolatry. The result of not fully driving out the Canaanites was far worse than Israel imagined.

2. (14-15) God's wrath upon their sin of idolatry. And the anger of the LORD was hot against

Israel. So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. Wherever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for calamity, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn to them. And they were greatly distressed.

a. **And the anger of the LORD was hot**

against Israel: God's response to Israel's forsaking of Him is no surprise; He specifically promised that He would do this in the covenant He made with Israel, which was characterized by blessings for obedience and cursing for disobedience (Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28).

i. We serve God under the terms of a different covenant, a better covenant (Heb. 8:6). When we forsake God, and are not abiding in Jesus Christ, things may - and often do - go badly for us, but not because God has actively set His hand against us as He did to Israel under the Old Covenant. When we are not abiding in Jesus, and things go badly for us, it is simply because our actions have consequences, and we reap the bitter fruit of not keeping ourselves in the love of God (Jude 21). For us, God doesn't *need* to set His hand against us; we usually hurt ourselves badly enough.

b. **So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them:** The purpose of all this, was so that when Israel was **greatly distressed**, they would turn their hearts back to **LORD**. God's goal wasn't punishment, but repentance.

i. Therefore, we can ask: is this a manifestation of God's *love* or *hate* for Israel? It is, of course, His love; the worst judgment God can bring upon a person is to leave them alone, to stop trying to bring

them to repentance.

ii. We see the same principle in the relationship between parents and children; though children often wish their parents would just leave them alone, it is really their worst fear that no one would love them enough to correct them.

iii. Shannon Wilsey was a pornography star who went by the name Savannah. The 23 year old woman made a lot of movies and a lot of money, but she put a gun to her head and killed her self. Though a success by industry standards, the police detective investigating the case said, "I think her whole life caused this suicide." Shannon bragged about doing crazy things, yet she told a close friend that she wished her mother would have stopped her. The friend said, "She felt bad because her mother didn't say anything about her being in the business." After her suicide, an unmailed letter was found where she talked about what she wished her dad would have done.

"Where were you when I was dating rock star Gregg Allman when he was twenty-five years older than me? Where were you when I was on heroin? Where were you when I started doing porno movies?" The dad said her would have been there *had she only asked*.

3. (16-19) The pattern of sin and bondage, deliverance, blessing, followed by sin and bondage again in the days of the Judges.

Nevertheless, the LORD raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them. Yet they would not listen to their judges, but they played the harlot with other gods, and bowed down

to them. They turned quickly from the way in which their fathers walked, in obeying the commandments of the LORD; they did not do so. And when the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed them and harassed them. And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way.

a. Nevertheless, the LORD raised up

judges who delivered them: God, because of His great love for His people, would raise up a judge - a hero - to rescue them from their calamity. God did this **nevertheless** - not because Israel got to a place where they deserved such a deliverer from God, but in spite of the fact that they were undeserving.

b. The LORD was moved to pity by their

groaning: During the time of the Judges, Israel would only cry out to God and really depend on Him in a time of emergency; this is why many people are in a constant state of crisis - God knows that is the only way they can be kept trusting in Him.

i. God's desire is that we be in a constant relationship of dependence on Him. The ultimate example of this is Jesus, who said: *Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.* (Joh. 5:19)

c. When the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers: The pattern of bondage, deliverance, and blessing, followed by sin and bondage again, may be as depressing as it is characteristic of many Christian lives today.

However, we must remember that we live with the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, and under a new covenant, where we are made new creatures in Jesus - privileges that Israel, in the days of the Judges, knew *nothing* of.

d. **They did not cease from their own**

doings: Their sin was **their own doings**; they couldn't blame it on anyone or anything else. In the same way, their sin was **their own** - they didn't learn it from God, but came from their own corrupt natures.

i. Sometimes when one of my children is doing something wrong, I will ask them:

"Did you learn that from me? Do you see mommy or daddy doing that?" Of course,

my children *do* learn some bad things from me; but other things they get from their own corrupt selves, or other influences. If we just stick to what the **LORD** teaches us, we'll always be on the right track.

e. **Nor from their stubborn way: Stubborn** (also translated as *stiff-necked*) is a word that was also applied to Israel many time during the Exodus (Exo. 32:9; 33:3, 5). A change of location - even coming into the Promised Land - didn't necessarily mean a change of heart for Israel. We should never count on sanctification by relocation; wherever you go, you take you with you. A new environment doesn't always mean a new attitude.

i. The ancient Hebrew word for **stubborn**

(*kawsheh*) comes from the idea of being hard or severe. The way of stubbornness

against the **LORD** is indeed a hard way to live.

4. (20-23) God gives them over to their sinful compromise.

Then the anger of the LORD was hot against

Israel; and He said, "Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded

their fathers, and has not heeded My voice, I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which

Joshua left when he died, so that through them I may test Israel, whether they will keep the ways of the LORD, to walk in them as their fathers kept *them*, or not." Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out immediately; nor did He deliver them into the hand of Joshua.

a. Because this nation has transgressed

My covenant: When God said, " **this nation**"

instead of "My nation" it showed that Israel wasn't abiding in their relationship with God.

b. I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left: Israel wanted these Canaanite nations around, so God will give them the worst punishment He can think of: He will allow it.

c. Therefore the LORD left those nations: We must guard constantly against setting our hearts on sinful things; we may get to the point where God may allow us to have them - thus bringing sin, bondage, and pain into our lives.

© 2003 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** but you must not make an agreement with the people who live in this land. You should tear down the altars where they worship.' But you have disobeyed me. Why would you do such a thing? **3** At that time I also warned you, 'If you disobey, I will not drive out the Canaanites before you. They will ensnare you and their gods will lure you away.'"

4 When the LORD's messenger finished speaking these words to all the Israelites, the people wept loudly. **5** They named that place Bokim and offered sacrifices to the LORD there.

6 When Joshua dismissed the people, the Israelites went to their allotted portions of territory, intending to take possession of the land. **7** The people worshiped the LORD throughout Joshua's lifetime and as long as the elderly men who outlived him remained alive. These men had witnessed all the great things the LORD had done for Israel. **8** Joshua

son of Nun, the LORD's servant, died at the age of one hundred ten. **9** The people buried him in his allotted land in Timnath Heres in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. **10** That entire generation passed away; a new generation grew up that had not personally experienced the LORD's presence or seen what he had done for Israel.

11 The Israelites did evil before the LORD by worshiping the Baals. **12** They abandoned the LORD God of their ancestors who brought them out of the land of Egypt.

They followed other gods – the gods of the nations who lived around them. They worshiped them and made the LORD angry. **13** They abandoned the LORD and worshiped Baal and the Ashtars.

14 The LORD was furious with Israel and handed them over to robbers who plundered them. He turned them over to their enemies who lived around them. They could not withstand their enemies' attacks. **15** Whenever they went out to fight, the LORD did them harm, just as he had warned and solemnly vowed he would do. They suffered greatly.

16 The LORD raised up leaders who delivered them from these robbers. **17** But they did not obey their leaders.

Instead they prostituted themselves to other gods and worshiped them. They quickly turned aside from the path their ancestors had walked. Their ancestors had obeyed the LORD's commands, but they did not. **18** When the LORD raised up leaders for them, the LORD was with each leader and delivered the people from their enemies while the leader remained alive. The LORD felt sorry for them when they cried out in agony because of what their harsh oppressors did to them. **19** When a leader died, the next generation would again act more wickedly than the previous one. They would follow after other gods, worshiping them and bowing down to them. They did not give up their practices or their stubborn ways.

20 The LORD was furious with Israel. He said, "This nation has violated the terms of the agreement I made with their

ancestors by disobeying me. **21** So I will no longer remove before them any of the nations that Joshua left unconquered when he died. **22** Joshua left those nations to test Israel. I wanted to see whether or not the people would carefully walk in the path marked out by the LORD, as their ancestors were careful to do.” **23** This is why the LORD permitted these nations to remain and did not conquer them immediately; he did not hand them over to Joshua.

1 These were the nations the LORD permitted to remain so he could use them to test Israel – he wanted to test all those who had not experienced battle against the Canaanites.

Guzik - Judges 3:1-31

Judges 3 - The First Three Judges

A. The pagan nations left in Israel's midst.

1. (1-2) God's reason for allowing these nations to continue in Israel's appointed land.

Now these *are* the nations which the LORD left, that He might test Israel by them, *that is*, all who had not known any of the wars in Canaan (*this was* only so that the generations of the children of Israel might be taught to know war, at least those who had not formerly known it), a. **These are the nations which the LORD**

left: God left these Canaanite nations behind because Israel was not faithful in driving them out.

i. In the same way, we can say to a person who has "pagan territory" in their life, "the reason is because you allow it to be there."

And, at the most basic level, that is true.

b. **That He might test Israel by them:** It was within the power of God to eliminate those pagan nations without any help from Israel. God allowed the pagan nations to remain for a reason. The word **test** here is used in the sense of "proving." These nations would remain because God wanted to *prove* the faithfulness of Israel to Himself, and to *improve* their reliance on Him.

i. Likewise, the person who has "pagan

territory" in their lives knows that God is able to change him instantly. Why doesn't

God just do that? Why does it have to be so hard?

ii. God doesn't just instantly change *every* area of our lives so that our relationship with Him can be proved and improved; so that we will live a life of true partnership with God.

c. **So that the generations of the children of Israel might be taught to know war:** This is another reason why God allowed the Canaanites to remain where Israel did not drive them out. No one *likes* the struggle against sin, but the battle is good for us. The symbol of Christianity is a cross, not a feather bed.

i. Parents quickly learn that you don't really help your children if you make everything easy for them.

2. (3-4) The pagan nations are specifically listed.

Namely, five lords of the Philistines, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites who dwelt in Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal Hermon to the entrance of Hamath. And they

were *left*, that *He might* test Israel by them, to know whether they would obey the

commandments of the LORD, which He had commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.

a. **Namely:** We could perhaps make our own specific list of "pagan territory" in our lives; such a list is helpful because it forces you to identify your enemy.

b. **That He might test Israel by them, to know whether they would obey:** The reason that God didn't just eliminate these nations is again stated. It was to *prove* Israel's commitment to God's word. If they were faithful to the word of God the other nations would not hinder them and they would grow strong enough to drive them out completely.

B. The first judge: Othniel.

1. (5-7) The apostasy of Israel in the days of Othniel.

Thus the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons; and they served their gods. So the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD. They forgot the LORD their God, and served the Baals and Asherahs.

a. They took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their

sons: Simply, their sin was intermarriage with the pagan nations in their midst.

i. What *led* to their sin was subtler. First, it was the allowing of pagan territory in their midst. This was dangerous for them and dangerous for us.

ii. Second, *romance* led them into sin. There is nothing wrong with romance, but we have a terrible habit of falling in love with people that we have no real business falling in love with.

iii. Pro. 4:23 says *Keep* (literally, *guard* or *protect*) *your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life*. If we don't guard our hearts, we can end up in trouble.

b. They forgot the LORD their God, and

served the Baals and Asherahs: Their ungodly romances led them to the worship of the pagan gods Baal and Ashtoreth.

i. Jesus told us that following Him would require that we give up the things we love most (Mar. 10:29-30). Often an ungodly romance falls into this exact category.

2. (8) Israel's servitude to the king of Mesopotamia.

Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and He sold them into the hand of

Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia; and the children of Israel served Cushan-Rishathaim eight years.

a. He sold them into the hand of Cushan-

Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia: God gave Israel just what they wanted. They didn't want to serve God, so He allowed them to be in bondage to a pagan king. Israel reaped exactly what they sowed.

b. Eight years: It was many years of bondage before Israel cried out unto the LORD.

3. (9-11) God's deliverance through Othniel.

When the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the children of Israel, who delivered them: Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the LORD delivered Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed over Cushan-Rishathaim. So the land had rest for forty years. Then Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

a. When the children of Israel cried out to the LORD: After the eight years of bondage Israel finally cried out in dependence on God. It often takes many years of bondage and calamity before man look away from self and unto God.

b. The LORD raised up a deliverer . . .

Othniel: Othniel was the son-in-law of the great hero Caleb (Jdg. 1:12-3) and his wife was also a woman of faith (Jdg. 1:13-15).

c. The Spirit of the LORD came upon him: This is enough to know about Othniel. The Holy Spirit empowered him for the job God called him to do.

i. Othniel *lived* the principle of Zec. 4:6: *Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.*

C. The second judge: Ehud.

1. (12-14) The cycle continues: Israel sins and is sold into servitude.

And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD. So the LORD strengthened

Eglon king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD. Then he gathered to himself the people of Ammon and Amalek, went and defeated Israel, and took

possession of the City of Palms. So the children of Israel served Eglon king of Moab eighteen years.

a. The children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD: When God brought deliverance through the work of Othniel, Israel eventually drifted back from their dependence and obedience towards God. Their victory would not automatically last forever; it had to be maintained.

b. The children of Israel served Eglon: Israel's sin brought them into bondage. They suffered 8 years of bondage before they cried out to the LORD in the days of Othniel. Here they endure 18 stubborn years of bondage before they cried out to the LORD.

i. Sin always brings bondage; though it comes to us deceptively. The fish never contemplates the bondage of the hook when it goes after the bait; Satan snares us by making the bait attractive and hiding the hook.

ii. A news story told of a grease processing plant that opened up a 55-gallon drum of grease that came from a prison. Inside, they found a little bit of grease, but a dead prison inmate. He tried to escape by hiding in the barrel, but his quest for freedom became a means of bondage and death for him. He was deceived like we are deceived by sin, thinking that it can be a path to freedom. Instead, it only brings bondage and death.

2. (15) God raises up a deliverer for Israel: Ehud.

But when the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for them: Ehud the son of Gera,

the Benjamite, a left-handed man. By him the children of Israel sent tribute to Eglon king of Moab.

a. **When the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer:** This shows the mercy of God. When Israel repeatedly drifted from God, He had every right to cast them off completely. Yet He still responded when they finally did call on Him for deliverance.

b. **Ehud . . . a left-handed man:** In the ancient world left-handed people were often forced to become right-handed. This made Ehud's standing as **a left-handed man** more unusual.

3. (16-26) Ehud's daring assassination of Eglon.

Now Ehud made himself a dagger (it was double-edged and a cubit in length) and fastened it under his clothes on his right thigh. So he brought the tribute to Eglon king of Moab. (Now Eglon *was* a very fat man.) And when he had finished presenting the tribute, he sent away the people who had carried the tribute. But he himself turned back from the stone images that *were* at Gilgal, and said, "I have a secret message for you, O king." He said, "Keep silence!" And all who attended him went out from him. And Ehud came to him (now he was sitting upstairs in his cool private chamber). Then Ehud said, "I have a message from God for you." So he arose from *his* seat. Then Ehud reached with his left hand, took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly. Even the hilt went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade, for he did not draw the dagger out of his belly; and his entrails came out. Then Ehud went out through the porch and shut the doors of the upper room behind him and locked them. When

he had gone out, Eglon's servants came to look, and *to their* surprise, the doors of the upper room were locked. So they said, "He is probably attending to his needs in the cool chamber." So they waited till they were embarrassed, and still he had not opened the doors of the upper room.

Therefore they took the key and opened *them*.

And there was their master, fallen dead on the floor. But Ehud had escaped while they delayed, and passed beyond the stone images and escaped to Seirah.

a. **He brought the tribute to Eglon king of Moab:** Israel had to pay this **tribute** money because they were under the domination of the king of Moab. Ehud came to Eglon as a messenger or courier.

b. **I have a message from God for you:** Ehud certainly told the truth when he said this.

The message was, "Those who oppress the people of God touch the apple of His eye and will be judged for it."

i. This **message from God** was not good news for Eglon. His name means "a little calf" and in Eglon's case, it was a fatted calf.

c. **Ehud reached with his left hand:** Because most men fought with their right hand, it wasn't expected for a man to use his left hand with a dagger or a sword. This shows how cunning Ehud was and how unexpected the strike was to Eglon.

d. **He is probably attending to his needs in the cool chamber:** Without being coarse, we can see how real and true-to-life the Bible is. It describes normal, everyday functions but in a dignified way.

4. (27-30) Ehud leads the Israelites in battle against the Moabites.

And it happened, when he arrived, that he blew the trumpet in the mountains of Ephraim, and the children of Israel went down with him from the mountains; and he led them. Then he said to them, "Follow *me*, for the LORD has delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand." So they went down after him, seized the fords of the Jordan leading to Moab, and did not allow anyone to cross over. And at that time they killed about ten thousand men of Moab, all stout men of valor; not a man escaped. So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest for eighty years.

a. **And he led them:** As much cunning and courage as Ehud had, he could not do the work by himself. It was essential for brave and faithful men to rally around him. Ehud led, but he had to have followers.

i. In the same way, God raises up leaders in the church, but they can't do the work by themselves. The whole body needs to work together.

b. **Follow me, for the LORD has delivered:** Ehud asked the Israelites to **follow** him, because he was their leader. Yet he also encouraged them to look with faith to the LORD (**for the LORD has delivered your enemies into your hand**).

c. **And the land had rest for eighty years:** Ehud's cunning and courage, coupled with Israel's faithful following of a leader, brought Israel's longest period of freedom under the 400-year period of the Judges. Ehud is a dramatic example of how in the LORD, one man can make a difference, and how God will call others to work with that one man.

D. The third judge: Shamgar.

1. (31a) The brief story of Shamgar.

After him was Shamgar the son of Anath,

a. **Shamgar the son of Anath:** Shamgar is one of six individuals we call "minor" judges, because not much is written about them. Yet the work they did for God was just as important in their day as anyone else's work.

2. (31b) Shamgar's great accomplishment.

Who killed six hundred men of the Philistines with an ox goad; and he also delivered Israel.

a. **Killed six hundred men of the Philistines:** Shamgar was a man of great accomplishment. Perhaps so little is said about Shamgar because his story was so well known.

b. **With an ox goad:** Shamgar is an excellent example of serving for God. He simply used

what God put in his hand - in his case, an ox goad.

i. An ox goad was a stick that was 8 feet long, and about 6 inches around at the big end. One end of the ox goad was pointy (for poking the ox), and the other end was like a chisel (for scraping the plow clean of dirt).

ii. "In the hands of a strong, skilful man, such an instrument must be more dangerous and more fatal than any sword." (Clarke).

c. **He also delivered Israel:** There was nothing spectacular about an ox goad. But God can use, and wants to use, whatever is in our hands. Shamgar was merely a laborer doing his job; but he took what was in his hand when prompted by God and did great things.

i. Shamgar was like Moses and his shepherd's staff or David and his sling shot.

God used each of those simple things for great works.

© 2003 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** He left those nations simply because he wanted to teach the subsequent generations of Israelites, who had not experienced the earlier battles, how to conduct holy war. **3** These were the nations: the five lords of the Philistines, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites living in Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal Hermon to Lebo-Hamath. **4** They were left to test Israel, so the LORD would know if his people would obey the commands he gave their ancestors through Moses. **5** The Israelites lived among the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. **6** They took the Canaanites' daughters as wives and gave their daughters to the Canaanites; they worshiped their gods as well.

7 The Israelites did evil in the LORD's sight. They forgot the LORD their God and worshiped the Baals and the Asherahs.

8 The LORD was furious with Israel and turned them over to King Cushan-Rishathaim of Aram-Naharaim.

They were Cushan-Rishathaim's subjects for eight years. **9** When the Israelites cried out for help to the LORD, he raised up a deliverer for the Israelites who rescued them.

His name was Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.

10 The LORD's spirit empowered him and he led Israel. When he went to do battle, the LORD handed over to him King Cushan-Rishathaim of Aram and he overpowered him.

11 The land had rest for forty years; then Othniel son of Kenaz died.

12 The Israelites again did evil in the LORD's sight. The LORD gave King Eglon of Moab control over Israel because they had done evil in the LORD's sight. **13** Eglon formed alliances with the Ammonites and Amalekites. He came and defeated Israel, and they seized the City of Date Palm Trees.

14 The Israelites were subject to King Eglon of Moab for eighteen years.

15 When the Israelites cried out for help to the LORD, he raised up a deliverer for them. His name was Ehud son of Gera the Benjaminite, a left-handed man. The Israelites sent him to King Eglon of Moab with their tribute payment.

16 Ehud made himself a sword – it had two edges and was eighteen inches long. He strapped it under his coat on his right thigh. **17** He brought the tribute payment to King Eglon of Moab. (Now Eglon was a very fat man.) **18** After Ehud brought the tribute payment, he dismissed the people who had carried it. **19** But he went back once he reached the carved images at Gilgal. He said to Eglon, "I have a secret message for you, O king." Eglon said, "Be quiet!" All his attendants left. **20** When Ehud approached him, he was sitting in his well-ventilated upper room all by himself. Ehud said, "I have a message from God for you."

When Eglon rose up from his seat, **21** Ehud reached with his left hand, pulled the sword from his right thigh, and drove it into Eglon's belly. **22** The handle went in after the blade, and the fat closed around the blade, for Ehud did not pull the sword out of his belly. **23** As Ehud went out into the

vestibule, he closed the doors of the upper room behind him and locked them.

24 When Ehud had left, Eglon's servants came and saw the locked doors of the upper room. They said, "He must be relieving himself in the well-ventilated inner room." **25**

They waited so long they were embarrassed, but he still did not open the doors of the upper room. Finally they took the key and opened the doors. Right before their eyes was their master, sprawled out dead on the floor! **26**

Now Ehud had escaped while they were delaying. When he passed the carved images, he escaped to Seirah.

27 When he reached Seirah, he blew a trumpet in the Ephraimite hill country. The Israelites went down with him from the hill country, with Ehud in the lead. **28** He said to them, "Follow me, for the LORD is about to defeat your enemies, the Moabites!" They followed him, captured the fords of the Jordan River opposite Moab, and did not let anyone cross. **29** That day they killed about ten thousand Moabites – all strong, capable warriors; not one escaped.

30 Israel humiliated Moab that day, and the land had rest for eighty years.

31 After Ehud came Shamgar son of Anath; he killed six hundred Philistines with an oxgoad and, like Ehud, delivered Israel.

1 The Israelites again did evil in the LORD's sight after Ehud's death.

Guzik - Judges 4:1-24

Judges 4 - Deborah and Barak

A. Deborah, the fourth Judge.

1. (1-3) The cycle begins again: apostasy, servitude and supplication.

When Ehud was dead, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD. So the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his

army *was* Sisera, who dwelt in Harosheth Hagoyim. And the children of Israel cried out to the LORD; for Jabin had nine hundred chariots of iron, and for twenty years he harshly oppressed the children of Israel.

a. **When Ehud was dead, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD:** The continual drift to disobedience makes us less and less confident of man but more and more impressed with the mercy and

grace of God. Though Israel kept forsaking Him, He kept working with them.

b. **So the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan:** God loved Israel too much to let them go their own way. There may be times when we wish God would leave us alone, we are ultimately thankful for His continued dealing with us, even when it isn't comfortable.

i. Even when God is dealing with us in this way, it still may take a good while until we turn our hearts to Him - it took Israel twenty years of bondage before they **cried out to the LORD**. But we can do that right now!

c. **Jabin king of Canaan:** God used an entirely different oppressor this time. God can, and will, use anything to get our attention and keep us in line with His will.

2. (4-5) Deborah: a prophetess and a judge for Israel.

And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.

a. **And Deborah, a prophetess:** Some consider it unexpected for God to raise up a woman as prophetess. But the New Testament makes it clear that God grants the gift of prophecy unto women also, and they are to practice it appropriately (1Co. 11:5).

i. The Bible tells us of several other prophetesses: Miriam (Exo. 15:20), Huldah

(2Ki. 22:14), Anna (Luk. 2:36), and Philip's four daughters (Act. 21:8-9).

ii. From 1Co. 11:5, we find that the essential element to a woman's ministry as a prophetess in the early church was her obvious submission to the male leadership in the church (evidenced by her wearing of a veil). A woman was to use her gifts in the context of order established by the leaders of the church - just like anyone's gift.

iii. This is always possible because the gift of prophecy never "overwhelms" the one who receives it; *the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets* (1Co. 14:32).

b. **She judged Israel at that time:** Even more consider it unexpected for God to raise up a woman to be a judge - a *shaphat*, a heroic leader for Israel. Deborah was a woman greatly used by God and she was also a woman who respected the people God put in authority over her - notably, Barak.

i. The issue, from a New Testament perspective, is not whether women can be used greatly by God. *Of course they can.* The issue is one of headship, final accountability, and authority - and God has granted these responsibilities to men in both the home and the church. Women can be used greatly by God, but it is to be under the headship of male authority in the church.

ii. The reasons have nothing to do with any notion of male superiority; they have to do with God's ordained order (1Co. 11:3), in light of God's order of creation (1Co. 11:8-9), in light of the presence of watching angels (1Co. 11:10), and in light of the nature of the fall (1Ti. 2:14).

iii. The reasons also have nothing to do with any notion of female inferiority; even as Jesus was under the headship and authority of His Father (Joh. 5:19) without being inferior in any way (Joh. 1:1;10:30).

c. And the children of Israel came up to

her for judgment: Often it is assumed that Deborah's was allowed leadership because men failed to take the position. While later we will see that Barak doesn't seem to be all he should be, we have no indication that he failed to do something God told him to do in taking leadership.

3. (6-7) Deborah calls Barak with a message from God.

Then she sent and called for Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, "Has not the LORD God of Israel commanded, 'Go and deploy *troops* at Mount Tabor; take with you ten thousand men of the sons of Naphtali and of the sons of Zebulun; and against you I will deploy Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude at the River Kishon; and I will deliver him into your hand'?"

a. **And she sent and called for Barak:** Deborah does not immediately believe that God called her alone to deliver Israel. She realized that God would do much of the work through Barak.

b. Has not the LORD God of Israel

commanded? The use of this phrase suggests that Deborah is *confirming* something that the **LORD** already spoke to Barak. God often brings confirmation when He speaks to us, especially if what we believe He wants us to do will affect other people.

4. (8-10) Barak will only lead if Deborah accompanies.

And Barak said to her, "If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go!" So she said, "I will surely go with you; nevertheless there will be no glory for you in the journey you are taking, for the LORD will sell

Sisera into the hand of a woman." Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh. And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; he went up with ten thousand men under his command, and Deborah went up with him.

a. **If you will go with me, then I will go:** It doesn't seem unwise of Barak to ask Deborah to come with him. But the fact that he *demand*s it shows that he is trusting more in Deborah's relationship with God than with his own relationship with God.

b. **There will be no glory for you:** Because of this, Barak will not be the one to personally defeat Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army - but a woman will. We would expect that the woman to do this would be Deborah, but this prophecy will be fulfilled unexpectedly.

c. **He went up with ten thousand men under his command:** Nevertheless, Barak and all who went with him showed real courage and trust in God to go out against Sisera and his army. They had essentially no weapons to fight with against a technologically advanced army (having 900 chariots of iron), and God led them to fight on a plain, putting them at a big disadvantage.

C. Israel's defeat of Sisera.

1. (11-13) The armies gather together against one another. Now Heber the Kenite, of the children of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, had separated himself from the Kenites and pitched his tent near the terebinth tree at Zaanaim, which *is* beside Kedesh. And they reported to Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor.

So Sisera gathered together all his chariots, nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people who *were* with him, from Harosheth Hagoyim to the River Kishon.

a. **Heber the Kenite:** These were distant descendants of Israel, through Jethro, the priest of Midian and the **father-in-law of Moses**, back to Abraham and his second wife Keturah (Gen. 25:1-4).

b. So Sisera gathered together all his chariots, nine hundred chariots of iron: This was sophisticated and impressive military technology. The armies of Israel, under the direction of Barak and Deborah, were at a great disadvantage.

2. (14-16) Sisera and his army are utterly defeated.

Then Deborah said to Barak, "Up! For this *is* the day in which the LORD has delivered Sisera into your hand. Has not the LORD gone out before you?" So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following him. And the LORD routed Sisera and all *his* chariots and all *his* army with the edge of the sword before Barak; and Sisera alighted from *his* chariot and fled away on foot. But Barak pursued the chariots and the army as far as Harosheth Hagoyim, and all the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; not a man was left.

a. And the LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots: Because of Barak's great trust in God (as well as the trust his armies had in the **LORD**), God granted them a great victory against great odds.

b. The LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots: We know from Jdg. 5:4-5 and 5:21 that God helped Israel to victory by bringing a flash flood. The muddy conditions made the chariots of iron a hindrance, not a help in the battle.

i. God has infinite resources available for your victory, even when you can't see what they will be ahead of time.

c. Has not the LORD gone before you: This is a phrase that speaks of a king or general leading his troops (1Sa. 8:20). Therefore, Deborah played a big role in this victory. She was an encourager, building up the faith of Barak and his men. Her encouragement is that God, as a king, will go out before His people into battle.

3. (17-22) The death of Sisera by the hand of a woman.

However, Sisera had fled away on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite; for *there was* peace between Jabin king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said to him, "Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me; do not fear." And when he had turned aside with her into the tent, she covered him with a blanket. Then he said to her, "Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty." So she opened a jug of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him. And he said to her, "Stand at the door of the tent, and if any man comes and inquires of you, and says, 'Is there any man here?' you shall say, 'No.' " Then Jael, Heber's wife, took a tent peg and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple, and it went down into the ground; for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died. And then, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said to him, "Come, I will show you the man whom you seek." And when he went into her *tent*, there lay Sisera, dead with the peg in his temple.

a. **Sisera had fled away on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite:** Here the story takes an unexpected turn. God promised (Jdg. 4:9) that a woman would defeat Sisera. We would logically assume that this would be Deborah, but God had something else in mind. He will use the wife of a **Kenite** to accomplish Sisera's end.

b. **Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me; do not fear:** Because **there was peace between** the people of Sisera and the people of Jael, he had reason to believe he could trust Jael's invitation.

i. In addition, "Any pursuer would hardly think to look in a woman's tent for any man, let alone a weary fugitive, for this would be a breach of etiquette." (Cundall) c. **Drove the peg into his temple:** The gory detail of this account supports the fact that this is an eye-witness account. Jael knew how to handle a tent-peg because it was customarily the job of women to set up the tents. She

struck the peg so hard that **it went down into the ground.**

i. Jael broke a fundamental principle of hospitality, and many in the ancient world would think her a treacherous woman. She broke her promise to Sisera and killed a man that her own husband had made peace with.

ii. Yet God used even her treachery to accomplish His purpose. Surely, Sisera deserved to die; he fought against God's people on behalf of a leader who had *harshly oppressed the people of Israel* (Jdg. 4:3). The lesson for us is important - God can make even the evil of man serve His purpose: *Surely the wrath of man shall praise You* (Psa. 76:10). Yet, that *never* diminishes the personal responsibility of the one doing the evil. Judas' betrayal of Jesus served the eternal purpose of God, yet he still answered for that evil deed.

iii. Charles Spurgeon preached a wonderful sermon titled *Sin Slain* on how we can take Sisera as a type of sin, and his boss (Jabin) as a type of Satan. Just as Jael asked Barak to look at the dead body of Sisera, Spurgeon said we should look at sin slain by the work of Jesus, knowing He has already won the battle.

4. (23-24) After this decisive battle, full victory soon won for Israel.

So on that day God subdued Jabin king of Canaan in the presence of the children of Israel.

And the hand of the children of Israel grew stronger and stronger against Jabin king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.

a. **And the hand of the children of Israel grew stronger and stronger:** The battle against Sisera was

important, but it did not end the struggle. It was an important *event* that Israel must develop and walk in.

b. **Until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan:** The war was not over until **Jabin** was **destroyed**. Israel could not think the war was over when a great battle was won.

© 2003 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** The LORD turned them over to King Jabin of Canaan, who ruled in Hazor. The general of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth Haggoyim. **3** The Israelites cried out for help to the LORD, because Sisera had nine hundred chariots with iron-rimmed wheels, and he cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years.

4 Now Deborah, a prophetess, wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time. **5** She would sit under the Date Palm Tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the Ephraimite hill country. The Israelites would come up to her to have their disputes settled.

6 She summoned Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali. She said to him, "Is it not true that the LORD God of Israel is commanding you? Go, march to Mount Tabor! Take with you ten thousand men from Naphtali and Zebulun!

7 I will bring Sisera, the general of Jabin's army, to you at the Kishon River, along with his chariots and huge army. I will hand him over to you." **8** Barak said to her, "If you go with me, I will go. But if you do not go with me, I will not go."

9 She said, "I will indeed go with you.

But you will not gain fame on the expedition you are undertaking, for the LORD will turn Sisera over to a woman." Deborah got up and went with Barak to Kedesh.

10 Barak summoned men from Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh. Ten thousand men followed him; Deborah went up with him as well. **11** Now Heber the Kenite had moved away from the Kenites, the descendants of Hobab, Moses' father-in-law. He lived near the great tree in Zaanannim near Kedesh.

12 When Sisera heard that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor, **13** he ordered all his chariotry – nine hundred chariots with iron-rimmed wheels – and all the troops he had with him to go from Harosheth-Haggoyim to the River Kishon. **14** Deborah said to Barak, “Spring into action, for this is the day the LORD is handing Sisera over to you! Has the LORD not taken the lead?”

Barak quickly went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following him. **15** The LORD routed Sisera, all his chariotry, and all his army with the edge of the sword. Sisera jumped out of his chariot and ran away on foot. **16** Now Barak chased the chariots and the army all the way to Harosheth Haggoyim. Sisera’s whole army died by the edge of the sword; not even one survived!

17 Now Sisera ran away on foot to the tent of Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite, for King Jabin of Hazor and the family of Heber the Kenite had made a peace treaty. **18** Jael came out to welcome Sisera. She said to him, “Stop and rest, my lord. Stop and rest with me. Don’t be afraid.” So Sisera stopped to rest in her tent, and she put a blanket over him. **19** He said to her, “Give me a little water to drink, because I’m thirsty.” She opened a goatskin container of milk and gave him some milk to drink. Then she covered him up again. **20** He said to her, “Stand watch at the entrance to the tent. If anyone comes along and asks you, ‘Is there a man here?’ say ‘No.’”

21 Then Jael wife of Heber took a tent peg in one hand and a hammer in the other. She crept up on him, drove the tent peg through his temple into the ground while he was asleep from exhaustion, and he died. **22** Now Barak was chasing Sisera. Jael went out to welcome him. She said to him, “Come here and I will show you the man you are searching for.” He went with her into the tent, and there he saw Sisera sprawled out dead with the tent peg in his temple.

23 That day God humiliated King Jabin of Canaan before the Israelites. **24** Israel’s power continued to overwhelm King Jabin of Canaan until they did away with him.

1 On that day Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang this victory song:

Guzik - Judges 5:1-31

Judges 5 - The Song of Deborah

A. Blessing God for the deliverance He brings through His leaders.

1. (1-2) Theme of the song: The joy and blessing in being a willing instrument of God.

Then Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam sang on that day, saying:

"When leaders lead in Israel,
When the people willingly offer themselves,
Bless the LORD!

a. **When leaders lead:** Leadership is important in any endeavor and especially in the work of God. God expects leaders among His people to actually **lead**, showing there is a genuine need for leaders and their leadership.

b. **When the people willingly offer themselves:** Leaders are nothing without followers, and it is the job of **the people** to **willingly offer themselves** to their leaders.

i. We can think of the relation between leader and people as that of the conductor and the orchestra. The conductor *must* lead, and the orchestra *must* be ready and willing to follow the conductor's leadership. When the conductor does his job and the orchestra does their job, beautiful music is made.

2. (3-5) Remembering God's preservation of Israel in the past.

"Hear, O kings! Give ear, O princes!

I, *even I*, will sing to the LORD;

I will sing praise to the LORD God of Israel.

LORD, when You went out from Seir,

When You marched from the field of Edom,

The earth trembled and the heavens poured,

The clouds also poured water;

The mountains gushed before the LORD,
This Sinai, before the LORD God of Israel.

a. **LORD, when You went out from Seir:** God won the victory for Israel over Sisera by sending a great rain. In this song Deborah recalled a time when God did the same thing on behalf of Israel in the days of the Exodus (Deu. 33:2).

b. **When You marched from the field of Edom:** It is good for us to remember that God's goodness to us didn't just start today. He has been good to us for a long, long, time.

3. (6-8) Describing life under Canaanite oppression.

"In the days of Shamgar, son of Anath,
In the days of Jael,
The highways were deserted,
And the travelers walked along the byways.
Village life ceased, it ceased in Israel,
Until I, Deborah, arose,
Arose a mother in Israel.
They chose new gods;
Then *there was* war in the gates;
Not a shield or spear was seen among forty
thousand in Israel.

a. **Village life ceased, it ceased in Israel:** Not only was life hard under Israel's oppressors, but they also confiscated all weapons so the Israelites could not fight (**Not a shield or spear was seen among forty thousand in Israel**).

i. In the same way, Satan doesn't only want to oppress the Christian, he also wants to *disarm* the believer. He wants the believer to lay down the full armor of God that belongs to you in Jesus Christ (Eph. 6:12-18).

b. **Until I, Deborah, arose:** This wasn't necessarily pride on Deborah's part. She understood that God works through willing individuals, and she was the willing one in this crisis.

4. (9) Refrain: Bless the **LORD** for leaders who lead and followers who follow.

My heart *is* with the rulers of Israel Who offered themselves willingly with the people.

Bless the LORD!

a. **My heart is with the rulers of Israel:** Deborah didn't only care for *her* job of leadership. She also had a **heart** for other leaders and their work. Her vision was bigger than just getting "her job" done. She wanted to see the Kingdom of God advanced.

b. **Who offered themselves willingly with the people:** In Jdg. 5:2 Deborah spoke of the people offering themselves willingly. Here she notes that the sacrifices should also be borne by the leaders. They also must offer **themselves willingly**.

B. The victory remembered.

1. (10-12) A call to recount the great victory.

"Speak, you who ride on white donkeys,

Who sit in judges' attire,

And who walk along the road.

Far from the noise of the archers, among the watering places,

There they shall recount the righteous acts of the LORD,

The righteous acts *for* His villagers in Israel; Then the people of the LORD shall go down to the gates.

Awake, awake, Deborah!

Awake, awake, sing a song!

Arise, Barak, and lead your captives away,

O son of Abinoam!

a. **Speak, you who ride on white donkeys:** The song asks the civic leaders along with Deborah and Barak to tell the **villagers in Israel** the great things God did.

i. We should never hide our light under a

bushel (Mat. 5:15-16), but tell others of the great things God has done and is doing.

Many need to wake up and sing a song of praise to the **LORD**.

b. **For His villagers in Israel:** The common people *needed* to hear of God's great works, and it was the job of leaders to *tell* them.

2. (13-18) The tribes that helped and the tribes that didn't.

"Then the survivors came down, the people against the nobles;

The LORD came down for me against the mighty.

From Ephraim *were* those whose roots were in Amalek.

After you, Benjamin, with your peoples,

From Machir rulers came down,

And from Zebulun those who bear the recruiter's staff.

And the princes of Issachar *were* with Deborah; As Issachar, so *was* Barak Sent into the valley under his command;

Among the divisions of Reuben

There were great resolves of heart.

Why did you sit among the sheepfolds,

To hear the pipings for the flocks?

The divisions of Reuben have great searchings of heart.

Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan,

And why did Dan remain on ships?

Asher continued at the seashore,

And stayed by his inlets.

Zebulun *is* a people *who* jeopardized their lives to the point of death, Naphtali also, on the heights of the battlefield.

a. **The LORD came down for me against**

the mighty: As she remembered God's help, Deborah knew that His help came from the tribes of Israel, stirred to join in the battle.

Deborah praised the tribes that helped, notably Ephraim, West Manasseh, Benjamin, Zebulun, Issachar, and Naphtali.

b. **Why did you sit among the sheepfolds?**

Not every tribe was helpful. Reuben, East Manasseh, Dan, and Asher did not join in the battle.

3. (19-23) The battle described and a curse on an unhelpful city.

"The kings came *and* fought,
Then the kings of Canaan fought
In Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo;
They took no spoils of silver.
They fought from the heavens;
The stars from their courses fought against
Sisera.

The torrent of Kishon swept them away,
That ancient torrent, the torrent of Kishon.
O my soul, march on in strength!

Then the horses' hooves pounded,
The galloping, galloping of his steeds.
'Curse Meroz,' said the angel of the LORD,
'Curse its inhabitants bitterly,
Because they did not come to the help of the LORD,
To the help of the LORD against the mighty.'

a. **They fought from the heavens:** The battle was fought **from the heavens** in the sense that God sent rain that made the Canaanite chariots of no use (**the torrent of Kishon swept them away**).

b. **'Curse Meroz,' said the angel of the LORD:** Apparently the city of Meroz was of no help. God still accomplished His work, but the city of Meroz was cursed because they had no part in it.

4. (24-27) Praise for Jael for her killing of Sisera.

"Most blessed among women is Jael,
The wife of Heber the Kenite;
Blessed is she among women in tents.
He asked for water, she gave milk;
She brought out cream in a lordly bowl.
She stretched her hand to the tent peg,
Her right hand to the workmen's hammer;

She pounded Sisera, she pierced his head,
She split and struck through his temple.
At her feet he sank, he fell, he lay still;
At her feet he sank, he fell;
Where he sank, there he fell dead.

a. **Most blessed among women is Jael:**

What Jael did would be condemned by many in the days of the Judges. The responsibility to protect and bless a guest was an almost absolute command, and Jael killed a guest. Yet she is **blessed** here because her obedience to the cause of God was greater than her obedience to tradition and custom.

b. **At her feet he sank:** Deborah wanted to increase Sisera's shame by pointing out that it was a woman who ended his life.

5. (28-30) Reflection on the soon disappointment of Sisera's survivors.

"The mother of Sisera looked through the window,
And cried out through the lattice,
'Why is his chariot *so* long in coming?
Why tarries the clatter of his chariots?'
Her wisest ladies answered her,
Yes, she answered herself,
'Are they not finding and dividing the spoil: To every man a girl *or* two;
For Sisera, plunder of dyed garments,
Plunder of garments embroidered and dyed,
Two pieces of dyed embroidery for the neck of the looter?'

a. **The mother of Sisera looked through**

the window: Every death has consequences and Deborah thinks of - and celebrates - the consequences of Sisera's death.

b. **To every man a girl or two:** Cundall on the ancient Hebrew word translated **girl**: "Elsewhere in the Old Testament it means 'womb', and in the Moabite Stone it has the

meaning 'girl-slaves.' The nearest English equivalent is 'wench.' "

6. (31) Final praise to God and the long-term effect of the victory.

"Thus let all Your enemies perish, O LORD!

But *let* those who love Him *be* like the sun When it comes out in full strength."

So the land had rest for forty years.

a. **Thus let all Your enemies perish:** To love God is to hate His enemies. A man or woman is defined as much by who their enemies are as by who their friends are.

b. **Let those who love Him be like the sun:** How much better it is to be one of **those who love Him** than to be one of God's **enemies**!

© 2003 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** "When the leaders took the lead in Israel, When the people answered the call to war – Praise the LORD!

3 Hear, O kings!

Pay attention, O rulers!

I will sing to the LORD!

I will sing to the LORD God of Israel!

4 O LORD, when you departed from Seir, when you marched from Edom's plains,

the earth shook, the heavens poured down,

the clouds poured down rain. **5** The mountains trembled before the LORD, the God of Sinai; before the LORD God of Israel.

6 In the days of Shamgar son of Anath, in the days of Jael caravans disappeared;

travelers had to go on winding side roads.

7 Warriors were scarce,

they were scarce in Israel,

until you arose, Deborah,

until you arose as a motherly protector in Israel.

8 God chose new leaders,

then fighters appeared in the city gates;
but, I swear, not a shield or spear could be found, among
forty military units in Israel.

9 My heart went out to Israel's leaders, to the people who
answered the call to war.

Praise the LORD!

10 You who ride on light-colored female donkeys, who sit on
saddle blankets,
you who walk on the road, pay attention!

11 Hear the sound of those who divide the sheep among the
watering places;
there they tell of the Lord's victorious deeds, the victorious
deeds of his warriors in Israel.

Then the LORD's people went down to the city gates

-

12 Wake up, wake up, Deborah!

Wake up, wake up, sing a song!

Get up, Barak!

Capture your prisoners of war, son of Abinoam!

13 Then the survivors came down to the mighty ones; the
LORD's people came down to me as warriors.

14 They came from Ephraim, who uprooted Amalek, they
follow after you, Benjamin, with your soldiers.

From Makir leaders came down,
from Zebulun came the ones who march carrying an officer's
staff.

15 Issachar's leaders were with Deborah, the men of
Issachar supported Barak;

into the valley they were sent under Barak's command.

Among the clans of Reuben there was intense heart
searching.

16 Why do you remain among the sheepfolds, listening to
the shepherds playing their pipes for their flocks?

As for the clans of Reuben – there was intense searching of heart.

17 Gilead stayed put beyond the Jordan River.

As for Dan – why did he seek temporary employment in the shipyards?

Asher remained on the seacoast,
he stayed by his harbors.

18 The men of Zebulun were not concerned about their lives;

Naphtali charged on to the battlefields.

19 Kings came, they fought;
the kings of Canaan fought,
at Taanach by the waters of Megiddo,
but they took no silver as plunder.

20 From the sky the stars fought, from their paths in the heavens they fought against Sisera.

21 The Kishon River carried them off; the river confronted them – the Kishon River.

Step on the necks of the strong!

22 The horses' hooves pounded the ground; the stallions galloped madly.

23 'Call judgment down on Meroz,' says the LORD's angelic messenger;

'Be sure to call judgment down on those who live there,
because they did not come to help in the LORD's battle,
to help in the LORD's battle against the warriors.'

24 The most rewarded of women should be Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite!

She should be the most rewarded of women who live in tents.

25 He asked for water,
and she gave him milk;
in a bowl fit for a king,
she served him curds.

26 Her left hand reached for the tent peg, her right hand for the workmen's hammer.

She “hammered” Sisera,
she shattered his skull,
she smashed his head,
she drove the tent peg through his temple.

27 Between her feet he collapsed, he fell limp and was lifeless;

between her feet he collapsed and fell limp, in the spot where he collapsed,
there he fell limp – violently murdered!

28 Through the window she looked; Sisera’s mother cried out through the lattice:

‘Why is his chariot so slow to return?

Why are the hoofbeats of his chariot-horses delayed?’

29 The wisest of her ladies answer; indeed she even thinks to herself,

30 ‘No doubt they are gathering and dividing the plunder – a girl or two for each man to rape!

Sisera is grabbing up colorful cloth,

he is grabbing up colorful embroidered cloth, two pieces of colorful embroidered cloth,

for the neck of the plunderer!’

31 May all your enemies perish like this, O LORD!

But may those who love you shine like the rising sun at its brightest!”

And the land had rest for forty years.

1 The Israelites did evil in the LORD’s sight, so the LORD turned them over to Midian for seven years.

Guzik - Judges 6:1-40

Judges 6 - The Call of Gideon

A. Apostasy, servitude and supplication.

1. (1) Israel's apostasy brings them into servitude.

Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD.

So the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years, a. **Then the children of Israel did evil:** The *forty years of rest* (Jdg. 5:31) following the defeat of Sisera

eventually came to an end. In their prosperity and complacency, **Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD.**

b. **So the LORD delivered them into the**

hand of Midian: *God* brought Israel into bondage through the oppression of the Midianites. This was an example of God's *grace* and *mercy* to Israel because the oppression would make them turn back to God. It would have been worse if God just left them alone.

2. (2-6) The details of Israel's bondage to Midian.

And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel.

Because of the Midianites, the children of Israel made for themselves the dens, the caves, and the strongholds which *are* in the mountains. So it was, whenever Israel had sown, Midianites would come up; also Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them. Then they would encamp against them and destroy the

produce of the earth as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep nor ox nor donkey. For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, coming in as numerous as locusts; both they and their camels were

without number; and they would enter the land to destroy it. So Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites, and the children of Israel cried out to the LORD.

a. **The children of Israel made for**

themselves the dens, the caves, and the

strongholds: The oppression of Midian -

coming because of the sin of Israel - brought Israel into *humiliation*. Before they turned back to God they had to be *humbled*.

b. **Whenever Israel had sown, Midianites**

would come up: The Midianites did not continually occupy the land, but only came at the time of harvest to confiscate what the Israelites grew (**leave no sustenance for Israel**).

i. Israel's sin made all their hard work

profitless. All their produce and livestock was stolen after they worked hard to bring it to fruition. Sin does this. It robs us of what we work hard to gain.

ii. In May of 1990, the president of an American University was charged with two misdemeanor counts of making indecent telephone calls. Police evaluated about a dozen obscene calls made by the educator. He was later fired, and his wife left him. He lost everything for what, in retrospect, seemed like nothing.

c. **Both they and their camels were without number:** The Midianites dominated Israel because of their effective use of **camels**.

"It is clear that the use of this angular and imposing beast struck terror in the hearts of the Israelites." (Cundall) d. **And the children of Israel cried out to the LORD:** After the long season of humiliation, fruitless labor, poverty, and domination by an oppressive power, Israel *finally* **cried out to the LORD**. Prayer was their *last resort* instead of their *first resource*.

3. (7-10) In response to Israel's cry to the **LORD**, God sends a prophet.

And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried out to the LORD because of the Midianites, that the LORD sent a prophet to the children of Israel, who said to them, "Thus says the LORD

God of Israel: 'I brought you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of bondage; and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out before you and gave you their land. Also I said to you, "I *am* the LORD

your God; do not fear the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell." But you have not obeyed My voice.' "

a. **The LORD sent a prophet:** The delivering judge will appear later. Before Israel could receive and respond to the

work of the judge, they had to be prepared by this unnamed prophet.

b. **I brought you up from Egypt:** God spoke through the prophet, reminding Israel of all He did for them in the past. To face their current crisis, Israel needed a reminder of what God did before.

i. This reminded them of the *love* of God.

The God loving enough to deliver from Egypt before still loved them enough to deliver them from the Midianites.

ii. This reminded them of the *power* of God.

The God powerful enough to deliver from Egypt before was still powerful enough to deliver them from the Midianites.

c. **But you have not obeyed My voice:** God sent this messenger to tell them where the real problem was. It wasn't that the Midianites were so strong, it was that Israel was so disobedient.

i. Israel *thought* the problem was the Midianites but the real problem was *Israel*. It is human nature to blame *others* for problems that we cause.

ii. The message of the prophet also shows that when Israel **cried out to the LORD**, they didn't understand that *they* were the problem. Their cry to God for help did not mean that they recognized or repented of their sin.

B. The deliverer is called.

1. (11-13) The Angel of the LORD appears to Gideon.

Now the Angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth tree which *was* in Ophrah, which *belonged* to Joash the Abiezwite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide *it* from the Midianites. And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, "The LORD *is* with you, you mighty man of valor!" Gideon said to Him, "O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this

happened to us? And where *are* all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."

a. **The Angel of the LORD came and sat**

under the terebinth tree: When **the Angel of the LORD** appeared to Gideon, we recognize this is as a *theophany* - an Old Testament appearance of Jesus Christ, in human, bodily form, but before His incarnation in Bethlehem.

i. The description of the encounter with the **Angel of the LORD** shows that this is not merely an angel speaking on behalf of God.

It shows that God himself, appearing in human form, spoke to Gideon:

· *Then the LORD turned to him and said* (Jdg. 6:14)

· *And the LORD said to him* (Jdg. 6:16) ii. Since no man has seen God the Father at any time (Joh. 1:18, Joh. 5:27) and by nature the Holy Spirit is a spirit without bodily form, it is reasonable to see this as an appearance of the *Second Person* of the Trinity, as an appearance of *God the Son*.

However, this is not the *incarnation* in the same sense that Jesus was as a baby in

Bethlehem. At Bethlehem Jesus was *truly* and *fully* human (while also being truly and fully God). Here, it is more likely that Jesus took the *mere appearance* of humanity, doing so for a specific purpose.

b. **Gideon threshed wheat in the**

winepress: This was both difficult and humiliating. Wheat was **threshed** in open spaces, typically on a hill-top so the breeze could blow away the chaff. Wheat was not normally **threshed** in a sunken place like a **winepress**.

c. **The LORD is with you, you mighty man**

of valor! This was a strange greeting to Gideon. It didn't seem like the LORD was **with** him and it didn't seem like he was a **mighty man of valor**. Gideon might have turned to see if there was another person to whom the angel spoke.

d. **Where are all His miracles which our**

fathers told us about: Gideon *heard* about the great works of God in the past yet he wondered why did not see the same great

works in his day. Gideon thought the problem was with God (**now the LORD has forsaken**

us) - not with him and with the nation of Israel as a whole. In truth, Israel forsook God - God did not forsake Israel.

2. (14-16) Gideon's call to God's service.

Then the LORD turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?" So he said to Him, "O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan *is* the weakest in Manasseh, and I *am* the least in my father's house." And the LORD said to him, "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man."

a. **Go in this might of yours:** It is hard to see that Gideon had *any* **might** to go in. But the Angel of the LORD wasn't mocking Gideon when he told him, " **Go in this might of yours.**"

- Gideon had the **might** of the *humble*, threshing wheat on the winepress floor
- Gideon had the **might** of the *caring*, because he cared about the low place of Israel

- Gideon had the **might** of knowledge, because he knew God did great things in the past

- Gideon had the **might** of the *spiritually hungry* because he wanted to see God to great works again
- Gideon had the **might** of the *teachable*, because he listened to what the Angel of the LORD said

- Gideon had the **might** of the *weak*, and God's strength is perfected in weakness (2Co. 12:9)

b. O my Lord, how can I save Israel?

Gideon had might to go in, but he could not see himself as someone who could do great things for God. He thought of himself as a nobody, from the smallest clan in his tribe, and that he was the least in his own family.

i. At the same time, Gideon was correct: *he* could not **save Israel**. But a great God could use a small and weak Gideon.

c. Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man: God's assurance to Gideon was not to build up his self confidence, but to assure him that God was indeed with him. Gideon did not need more *self*-confidence, he needed more *God*-confidence.

i. It is important to know that God sent us

but it is even greater to know that He is

with us. This was the same assurance God gave to Moses (Exo. 3:12) and that Jesus gave all believers (Mat. 28:20).

3. (17-21) A sign from the Angel of the **LORD**.

Then he said to Him, "If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who talk with me. Do not depart from here, I pray, until I come to You and bring out my offering and set *it* before You." And He said, "I will wait until you come back." So Gideon went in and prepared a young goat, and unleavened bread from an ephah of flour. The meat he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot; and he brought *them* out to Him under the terebinth tree and presented *them*. The Angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay *them* on this rock, and pour out the broth." And he did so. Then the Angel of the LORD put out the end of the staff that *was* in His hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire rose out of the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread.

And the Angel of the LORD departed out of his sight.

a. Then show me a sign that it is You who talk with me: It was not wrong for Gideon to ask for a confirming sign.

It made sense to ask God to confirm some area of direction that was not specifically detailed in His word, and in regard to something as life-or-death as leading Israel into battle against an enemy.

i. For example, we don't need a special sign that God loves us because He forever

demonstrated His love at the cross according to Rom. 5:8.

This is true for many other

things specifically detailed in God's Word.

Yet when it comes to guidance in things not

specifically detailed in God's Word, we

should look for and expect confirmation in

various ways.

b. Fire rose out of the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread:

The miraculous sign alone should not have persuaded Gideon because there are miraculous deceptions. Yet this miracle of fire *together* with the other aspects of this whole experience should have persuaded Gideon that this all was from the LORD.

4. (22-24) Gideon reacts with awe and worship to the miraculous sign.

Now Gideon perceived that He *was* the Angel of the LORD.

So Gideon said, "Alas, O Lord GOD!

For I have seen the Angel of the LORD face to face." Then

the LORD said to him, "Peace *be* with you; do not fear, you

shall not die." So Gideon built an altar there to the LORD,

and called it The-LORD- *Is*- Peace. To this day it *is* still in

Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

C. The beginning of Gideon's ministry.

1. (25-27) Removing Baal worship from his midst.

Now it came to pass the same night that the

LORD said to him, "Take your father's young bull, the second

bull of seven years old, and tear down the altar of Baal that

your father has, and cut down the wooden image that *is*

beside it; and build an altar to the LORD your God on top of

this rock in the proper arrangement, and take the second

bull and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the image which you shall cut down." So Gideon took ten men from among his servants and did as the LORD had said to him.

But

because he feared his father's household and the men of the city too much to do *it* by day, he did *it* by night.

a. **Tear down the altar of Baal that your**

father has: In Gideon's community, Baal was worshipped right along side of Yahweh. God

called Gideon to get his own house in order first.

b. **He did it by night:** Gideon lacked the courage to do this in the daytime. Yet it is better to timidly obey the LORD than to not obey Him at all.

2. (28-32) The removal of an altar raises a controversy.

And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, there was the altar of Baal, torn down; and the wooden image that *was* beside it was cut down, and the second bull was being offered on the altar *which had been* built. So they said to one another, "Who has done this thing?" And when they had inquired and asked, they said, "Gideon the son of Joash has done this thing."

Then the men of the city said to Joash, "Bring out your son, that he may die, because he has torn down the altar of Baal, and because he has cut down the wooden image that *was* beside it." But Joash said to all who stood against him, "Would you plead for Baal? Would you save him? Let the one who would plead for him be put to death by morning! If he *is* a god, let him plead for himself, because his altar has been torn down!" Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, "Let Baal plead against him, because he has torn down his altar."

a. **Gideon the son of Joash has done this**

thing: They didn't have a hard time figuring out who was responsible for the destruction of the altar. Gideon was

found out immediately. He should have been bold to begin with because what he did could not be hidden.

b. Bring out your son, that he may die, because he has torn down the altar of

Baal: This shows just how powerful Baal worship was in Israel at this time. "The heresy had become the main religion." (Wolf) i. Ancient Israel worshipped Baal because he was thought to be the god of weather, and they relied on the weather for agricultural prosperity. In the hard economic times because of the Midianite oppression, people worshipped Baal all the more - not understanding that they only made things worse by not turning to God.

c. If he is a god, let him plead for himself, because his altar has been torn down!

Gideon's father made a very logical argument for preserving his son's life. Since Baal is the offended party, he can defend himself.

i. This is similar to what happened during a great move of God in the South Seas in the 19th Century. One tribal chief was converted to Christianity and he gathered up all the idols of his people. He told the idols he was going to destroy them, and then he gave them the chance to run away. He destroyed all the ones that sat there like dumb statues.

ii. This incident gave Gideon the nickname

Jerubbaal .

3. (33-35) Gideon gathers an army.

Then all the Midianites and Amalekites, the people of the East, gathered together; and they crossed over and encamped in the Valley of Jezreel. But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon; then he blew the trumpet, and the

Abiezrites gathered behind him. And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, who also gathered behind him. He also sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali; and they came up to meet them.

a. The Spirit of the LORD came upon

Gideon: This follows the familiar pattern of the Spirit's work upon men under the Old Covenant.

The Holy Spirit comes upon specific people for specific reasons, usually for divinely empowered leadership. Under the New Covenant, a broad and generous outpouring of the Holy Spirit is promised upon all flesh (Joe. 2:28-29, Act. 2:17-18).

b. Then he blew the trumpet: Because of this divine empowering, Gideon was able to gather an impressive number of troops on short notice. Jdg. 7:3 tells us that 32,000 men came to follow him into battle.

4. (36-40) God assures Gideon's doubts.

So Gideon said to God, "If You will save Israel by my hand as You have said; look, I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only, and *it is* dry on all the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said." And it was so. When he rose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece together, he wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowlful of water. Then Gideon said to God, "Do not be angry with me, but let me speak just once more: Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece; let it now be dry only on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew." And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the ground.

a. If you will save Israel by my hand as

You have said: Gideon asked God to do *another* miracle to confirm His word. Then he asked God to *a third* miracle to confirm it again.

i. Sometimes Christians talk about putting

out a "fleece" before the LORD. This phrase refers back to what Gideon did here. He used a literal fleece in asking God to confirm His Word with a sign.

b. Then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said:

Gideon showed that he had a weak, imperfect faith. We can understand (and encourage) his request for one sign (fulfilled in Jdg. 6:17-21).

But asking for second and third signs shows that his faith was weak.

i. The test was wrong because it was essentially a trick, and it had nothing to do with fighting the Midianites. Gideon probably didn't understand that he was actually dictating his terms to God. Sometimes God shows His displeasure with such requests.

In Luk. 1:18, when Zechariah, John the Baptist's father, asked for a confirming sign, the LORD made him mute until the birth of his son.

ii. Gideon also did not keep his word. God fulfilled the sign once, and Gideon said that would be enough for him. But he went back on his word after God fulfilled the first sign. Yet the LORD was still merciful and gracious to Gideon.

iii. Before being too hard on Gideon, we should consider the challenge that is ahead of him. Many of us would dismiss such a call out of hand, without even considering allowing God to confirm it. Gideon's weak faith is still greater than *no* faith. No wonder Gideon is included in the "hall of faith." (Heb. 11:32)

© 2003 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** The Midianites overwhelmed Israel. Because of Midian the Israelites made shelters for

themselves in the hills, as well as caves and strongholds. **3** Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, the Midianites, Amalekites, and the people from the east would attack them. **4** They invaded the land and devoured its crops all the way to Gaza. They left nothing for the Israelites to eat, and they took away the sheep, oxen, and donkeys. **5** When they invaded with their cattle and tents, they were as thick as locusts.

Neither they nor their camels could be counted. They came to devour the land. **6** Israel was so severely weakened by Midian that the Israelites cried out to the LORD for help.

7 When the Israelites cried out to the LORD for help because of Midian, **8** he sent a prophet to the Israelites.

He said to them, "This is what the LORD God of Israel says: 'I brought you up from Egypt and took you out of that place of slavery. **9** I rescued you from Egypt's power and from the power of all who oppressed you. I drove them out before you and gave their land to you. **10** I said to you, "I am the LORD your God! Do not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are now living!"

But you have disobeyed me.'"

11 The LORD's angelic messenger came and sat down under the oak tree in Ophrah owned by Joash the Abiezrite. He arrived while Joash's son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress so he could hide it from the Midianites. **12** The LORD's messenger appeared and said to him, "The LORD is with you, courageous warrior!"

13 Gideon said to him, "Pardon me, but if the LORD is with us, why has such disaster overtaken us? Where are all his miraculous deeds our ancestors told us about? They said, 'Did the LORD not bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and handed us over to Midian."

14 Then the LORD himself turned to him and said, "You have the strength. Deliver Israel from the power of the Midianites! Have I not sent you?" **15** Gideon said to him, "But Lord, how can I deliver Israel? Just look! My clan is the weakest in

Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my family.” **16** The LORD said to him, “Ah, but I will be with you! You will strike down the whole Midianite army.” **17**

Gideon said to him, “If you really are pleased with me, then give me a sign as proof that it is really you speaking with me. **18** Do not leave this place until I come back with a gift and present it to you.” The LORD said, “I will stay here until you come back.”

19 Gideon went and prepared a young goat, along with unleavened bread made from an ephah of flour. He put the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot. He brought the food to him under the oak tree and presented it to him. **20** God’s messenger said to him, “Put the meat and unleavened bread on this rock, and pour out the broth.”

Gideon did as instructed. **21** The LORD’s messenger touched the meat and the unleavened bread with the tip of his staff. Fire flared up from the rock and consumed the meat and unleavened bread. The LORD’s messenger then disappeared.

22 When Gideon realized that it was the LORD’s messenger, he said, “Oh no! Master, LORD! I have seen the LORD’s messenger face to face!” **23** The LORD said to him, “You are safe! Do not be afraid! You are not going to die!” **24** Gideon built an altar for the LORD there, and named it “The LORD is on friendly terms with me.” To this day it is still there in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

25 That night the LORD said to him, “Take the bull from your father’s herd, as well as a second bull, one that is seven years old. Pull down your father’s Baal altar and cut down the nearby Asherah pole. **26** Then build an altar for the LORD your God on the top of this stronghold according to the proper pattern. Take the second bull and offer it as a burnt sacrifice on the wood from the Asherah pole that you cut down.” **27** So Gideon took ten of his servants and did just as the LORD had told him. He was too afraid of his father’s family and the men of the city to do it in broad daylight, so he waited until nighttime.

28 When the men of the city got up the next morning, they saw the Baal altar pulled down, the nearby Asherah pole cut down, and the second bull sacrificed on the newly built altar.

29 They said to one another, "Who did this?"

They investigated the matter thoroughly and concluded that Gideon son of Joash had done it. **30** The men of the city said to Joash, "Bring out your son, so we can execute him! He pulled down the Baal altar and cut down the nearby Asherah pole." **31** But Joash said to all those who confronted him, "Must you fight Baal's battles? Must you rescue him? Whoever takes up his cause will die by morning! If he really is a god, let him fight his own battles!

After all, it was his altar that was pulled down." **32** That very day Gideon's father named him Jerub-Baal, because he had said, "Let Baal fight with him, for it was his altar that was pulled down."

33 All the Midianites, Amalekites, and the people from the east assembled. They crossed the Jordan River and camped in the Jezreel Valley. **34** The LORD's spirit took control of Gideon. He blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him. **35** He sent messengers throughout Manasseh and summoned them to follow him as well. He also sent messengers throughout Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they came up to meet him.

36 Gideon said to God, "If you really intend to use me to deliver Israel, as you promised, then give me a sign as proof.

37 Look, I am putting a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece, and the ground around it is dry, then I will be sure that you will use me to deliver Israel, as you promised." **38** The LORD

did as he asked. When he got up the next morning, he squeezed the fleece, and enough dew dripped from it to fill a bowl. **39** Gideon said to God, "Please do not get angry at me, when I ask for just one more sign. Please allow me one more test with the fleece. This time make only the fleece dry, while the ground around it is covered with dew." **40**

That night God did as he asked. Only the fleece was dry and the ground around it was covered with dew.

1 Jerub-Baal (that is, Gideon) and his men got up the next morning and camped near the spring of Harod. The Midianites were camped north of them near the hill of Moreh in the valley.

Guzik - Judges 7:1-25

Judges 7 - The Battle Against Midian

A. Israel's small army is too big for God to use.

1. (1-3) God tells Gideon to tell all his soldiers who are afraid to go home.

Then Jerubbaal (that *is*, Gideon) and all the people who *were* with him rose early and encamped beside the well of Harod, so that the camp of the Midianites was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley. And the LORD said to Gideon, "The people who *are* with you *are* too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.'

"Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, 'Whoever *is* fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.'

" And twenty-two thousand of the people returned, and ten thousand remained.

a. **The people who are with you are too**

many for Me: This was a great test of Gideon's faith. His army of 32,000 men was already overmatched by 135,000 Midianites. Yet God thought his army was *too big*, and He commanded Gideon to invite all who were afraid to go home. He was left with only 10,000 men.

i. Gideon was probably surprised at the number of men who were afraid to fight, and hoped that only a few hundred would leave. But we are told that they assembled in a place where they could see the 135,000 Midianite troops (Jdg. 7:8). The sight of a

huge opposing army made many Israelite soldiers afraid.

b. **Lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying "My own hand has saved me"** : This explains *why* the army of 32,000 was too large. Israel could still take credit for a victory if they had 32,000 troops. They could believe they were underdogs who triumphed through their own great bravery or strategy. God wanted the odds so bad that the victory would clearly be His alone.

i. If we really believe the principle, *Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD of hosts* (Zec. 4:6), then our smallness does not matter. If we really believe the principle, *Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the LORD our God* (Psa. 20:7), then smallness does not matter.

2. (4-8) Gideon must separate the men according to a particular test.

But the LORD said to Gideon, "The people *are* still *too* many; bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. Then it will be, *that* of whom I say to you, 'This one shall go with you,' the same shall go with you; and of whomever I say to you, 'This one shall not go with you,' the same shall not go." So he brought the people down to the water. And the LORD said to Gideon, "Everyone who laps from the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set apart by himself; likewise everyone who gets down on his knees to drink." And the number of those who lapped, *putting* their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water. Then the LORD said to Gideon, "By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand. Let all the *other* people go, every man to his place." So the people took provisions and their trumpets in their hands. And he sent away all *the rest of* Israel, every man to his tent, and retained those three hundred men.

Now the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.

a. **The people are still too many:** God already reduced Gideon's army from 32,000 to 10,000. Here He reduced it from 10,000 to 300.

He did this because 10,000 were **still too many** for God's purpose.

i. We rarely think that bigness can be a hindrance to the work of God. Yet it is harder to truly rely on God when we have many wonderful resources at hand. Though it certainly can be done, it is hard to be big and to rely only on the *LORD*. When we are big, it is possible to do a lot in human resources and "give the credit" to God.

ii. Paul was in danger of being too strong for his own good - so God brought a weakness

into his life, so that Paul would keep relying on the *LORD*'s strength - and be stronger than ever (2Co. 12:7-10).

b. **Bring them down to the water, and I**

will test them for you there: This seems a strange test, and there are different ideas as to why God used this to separate the soldiers.

Perhaps it was because those who cupped the water in their hands and brought it to their mouth were better soldiers, because they kept their eyes on their surroundings even when taking a drink.

i. **As a dog laps:** The ancient Hebrew word for **laps** is *yalok*, used to imitate the sound a dog makes when lapping water.

ii. We might say that God eliminated the fearful and those who thought first only of convenience, the easy way. "The thought is disturbing, but it may well be true, that the composition of God's army to fight Satan's hosts in any day is really little different. How many Christians are so fearful of the enemy

that they are of no real use in this warfare, and how many of the remainder are so self-centered, rather than God centered, that they find little place for effective ministry." (Wood)

c. By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand: God assured Gideon that victory was certain, even through only 300 men.

Now the Israeli army was less than 1% of its original size and the proportion was 400

Midianite soldiers to each Israeli soldier. Gideon could only trust in God because there was nothing else to trust.

3. (9-11) Gideon must spy on the camp of the Midianites and find encouragement.

It happened on the same night that the LORD said to him, "Arise, go down against the camp, for I have delivered it into your hand. But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant, and you shall hear what they say; and afterward your hands shall be strengthened to go down against the camp."

Then he went down with Purah his servant to the outpost of the armed men who *were* in the camp.

a. Arise, go down against the camp: God wanted Gideon to find encouragement in this

visit to the enemy's camp. This shows that

when God asks us to do hard things for Him, He doesn't fold His arms and sit back and expect us to do it on our own. He is there to guide us and keep us and encourage us all the way.

b. Afterward your hands shall be strengthened to go down against the

camp: This is the tender mercy of God. He dealt with the doubts and fears of Gideon, and wanted to assure him.

4. (12-15) God reassures Gideon through the Midianites.

Now the Midianites and Amalekites, all the people of the East, were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels *were* without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude. And when Gideon had come, there was a man telling a dream to his companion. He said, "I have had a dream: *To my* surprise, a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian; it came to a tent and struck it so that it fell and overturned, and the tent collapsed." Then his companion answered and said, "This *is* nothing else but the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel! Into his hand God has delivered Midian and the whole camp." And so it was, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, that he worshiped. He returned to the camp of Israel, and said, "Arise, for the LORD has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand."

a. **A loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian:** Only the very poor are **barley bread**. The vision meant that the camp of the Midianites would be knocked over by a humble nobody.

b. **This is nothing else but the sword of Gideon:** God allowed Gideon to see a great confirmation of His future work. This was obviously no coincidence and no display of luck. God used this situation to build the faith of Gideon, and it worked so well that all Gideon could do was worship God.

i. It was no accident that the man dreamed the dream that night; no accident that he told his friend about it at just that moment; no accident that Gideon came the exact place where he overheard the man telling the dream.

ii. It must have built the faith of Gideon to know that his enemies were afraid of *him*.

When we are weak in faith we often make our enemies stronger than they really are.

We could say that the devil is afraid of the normal Christian - or at least afraid of what they *could* be.

d. **Arise, for the LORD has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand:** Gideon's encouragement was contagious. Having received encouragement, he could not help but spread that encouragement to others and his encouragement built their faith.

B. The army is small enough to be used by God to win the battle.

1. (16-18) Gideon announces a strange battle plan.

Then he divided the three hundred men *into* three companies, and he put a trumpet into every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and torches inside the pitchers. And he said to them, "Look at me and do likewise; watch, and when I come to the edge of the camp you shall do as I do: When I blow the trumpet, I and all who *are* with me, then you also blow the trumpets on every side of the whole camp, and say, '*The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!*'"

a. **He divided the three hundred men into three companies:** There is no specific mention that God gave Gideon this plan through supernatural revelation. Yet, because Gideon is a Spirit-filled man (Jdg. 6:34), the supernatural can operate very naturally in his life.

b. **Look at me and do likewise:** This plan probably came very naturally to Gideon, but upon reflection he clearly saw how the Holy Spirit prompted him.

2. (19-23) God strikes the army of Midian with a surprise attack.

So Gideon and the hundred men who *were* with him came to the outpost of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just as they had posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers that *were* in their hands.

Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers; they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing; and they cried, "The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!" And every man stood in his place all around the camp; and the whole army ran and cried out and fled. When the three hundred blew the trumpets, the LORD set every man's sword against his companion throughout the whole camp; and the army fled to Beth Acacia, toward Zererah, as far as the border of Abel Meholah, by Tabbath. And the men of Israel gathered together from Naphtali, Asher, and all Manasseh, and pursued the Midianites.

a. Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers:

The Midianite soldiers awoke to an explosion of noise, light, and movement coming down on them from all directions. No wonder they thought they were being attacked by an army even bigger than they were.

b. And they cried, "The sword of the LORD

and of Gideon!" This cry was not the result of pride on Gideon's part. Instead, it showed wisdom in the attack because clearly the Midianites were already afraid of **the sword of Gideon** (Jdg. 7:14), and shouting helped to send them into panic.

i. Perhaps the Midianites did not know who the **LORD** was, but they knew there was a man from the **LORD** named Gideon. It was appropriate for Gideon to take this leadership role.

c. The LORD set every man's sword

against his companion throughout the

whole camp: The first phase of the battle wasn't between Israel and Midian, but the Midianites fought themselves. This is a good example of how we can be *more than conquerors through Him who loved us* (Rom. 8:37). We get the spoils of victory though Jesus won the battle for us.

i. The early Christian writer Origen often emphasized elaborate spiritual meanings to Biblical accounts. In this story he made the 300 men types of preachers of the gospel.

Their trumpets were a picture of preaching Christ crucified. Their torchlights represented the holy conduct of the preachers.

3. (24-25) Working towards total defeat of Midian.

Then Gideon sent messengers throughout all the mountains of Ephraim, saying, "Come down against the Midianites, and seize from them the watering places as far as Beth Barah and the Jordan." Then all the men of Ephraim gathered together and seized the watering places as far as Beth Barah and the Jordan. And they captured two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb.

They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb they killed at the winepress of Zeeb. They pursued Midian and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side of the Jordan.

a. **Come down against the Midianites:** This was *not* unbelief on Gideon's part. Though God started the work with a small number of

soldiers, once the work began, Gideon wanted many to get involved in the work.

b. **They pursued Midian:** God blessed the effort of people of Ephraim, and they made good success against the enemy and their leaders.

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2 The LORD said to Gideon, “You have too many men for me to hand Midian over to you. Israel might brag, ‘Our own strength has delivered us.’ **3** Now, announce to the men, ‘Whoever is shaking with fear may turn around and leave Mount Gilead.’” Twenty-two thousand men went home; ten thousand remained. **4** The LORD spoke to Gideon again, “There are still too many men. Bring them down to the water and I will thin the ranks some more.

When I say, ‘This one should go with you,’ pick him to go; when I say, ‘This one should not go with you,’ do not take him.” **5** So he brought the men down to the water. Then the LORD said to Gideon, “Separate those who lap the water as a dog laps from those who kneel to drink.” **6**

Three hundred men lapped; the rest of the men kneeled to drink water. **7** The LORD said to Gideon, “With the three hundred men who lapped I will deliver the whole army and I will hand Midian over to you. The rest of the men should go home.” **8** The men who were chosen took supplies and their trumpets. Gideon sent all the men of Israel back to their homes; he kept only three hundred men. Now the Midianites were camped down below in the valley.

9 That night the LORD said to Gideon, “Get up! Attack the camp, for I am handing it over to you. **10** But if you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with Purah your servant **11** and listen to what they are saying. Then you will be brave and attack the camp.” So he went down with Purah his servant to where the sentries were guarding the camp.

12 Now the Midianites, Amalekites, and the people from the east covered the valley like a swarm of locusts.

Their camels could not be counted; they were as innumerable as the sand on the seashore. **13** When Gideon arrived, he heard a man telling another man about a dream he had. The man said, "Look! I had a dream. I saw a stale cake of barley bread rolling into the Midianite camp. It hit a tent so hard it knocked it over and turned it upside down. The tent just collapsed." **14** The other man said, "Without a doubt this symbolizes the sword of Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite. God is handing Midian and all the army over to him."

15 When Gideon heard the report of the dream and its interpretation, he praised God. Then he went back to the Israelite camp and said, "Get up, for the LORD is handing the Midianite army over to you!" **16** He divided the three hundred men into three units. He gave them all trumpets and empty jars with torches inside them. **17** He said to them, "Watch me and do as I do. Watch closely! I am going to the edge of the camp. Do as I do! **18** When I and all who are with me blow our trumpets, you also blow your trumpets all around the camp. Then say, 'For the LORD and for Gideon!'"

19 Gideon took a hundred men to the edge of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just after they had changed the guards. They blew their trumpets and broke the jars they were carrying. **20** All three units blew their trumpets and broke their jars. They held the torches in their left hand and the trumpets in their right. Then they yelled, "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!" **21** They stood in order all around the camp. The whole army ran away; they shouted as they scrambled away. **22** When the three hundred men blew their trumpets, the LORD caused the Midianites to attack one another with their swords throughout the camp. The army fled to Beth Shittah on the way to Zererah. They went to the border of Abel Meholah

near Tabbath. **23** Israelites from Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh answered the call and chased the Midianites.

24 Now Gideon sent messengers throughout the Ephraimite hill country who announced, "Go down and head off the Midianites. Take control of the fords of the streams all the way to Beth Barah and the Jordan River."

When all the Ephraimites had assembled, they took control of the fords all the way to Beth Barah and the Jordan River.

25 They captured the two Midianite generals, Oreb and Zeeb. They executed Oreb on the rock of Oreb and Zeeb in the winepress of Zeeb. They chased the Midianites and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon, who was now on the other side of the Jordan River.

1 The Ephraimites said to him, "Why have you done such a thing to us? You did not summon us when you went to fight the Midianites!" They argued vehemently with him.

Guzik - Judges 8:1-35

Judges 8 - Pursuing After Midian

A. Gideon battles Midianite kings and contentious Israelites.

1. (1-3) Ephraim's complaint and Gideon's answer.

Now the men of Ephraim said to him, "Why have you done this to us by not calling us when you went to fight with the Midianites?" And they reprimanded him sharply. So he said to them,

"What have I done now in comparison with you?

Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? God has

delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb. And what was I able to do in

comparison with you?" Then their anger toward him subsided when he said that.

a. **And they reprimanded him sharply:** It seems that the men of Ephraim loved to be in the pre-eminent position. They were insulted that they would not get the credit for the victory over the Midianites. Jealousy always hinders the work of God.

b. What have I done now in comparison

with you? Gideon did not challenge their pride; he merely challenged them to get involved in the work of God that was at hand. His reply was a wise way to deal with contention when there is work for the LORD to be done.

2. (4-9) The sins of Succoth and Penuel.

When Gideon came to the Jordan, he and the three hundred men who *were* with him crossed over, exhausted but still in pursuit. Then he said to the men of Succoth, "Please give loaves of bread to the people who follow me, for they are exhausted, and I am pursuing Zebah and

Zalmunna, kings of Midian." And the leaders of Succoth said, "Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hand, that we should give bread to your army?" So Gideon said, "For this cause, when the LORD has delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers!" Then he went up from there to Penuel and spoke to them in the same way. And the

men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered. So he also spoke to the men of Penuel, saying, "When I come back in peace, I will tear down this tower!"

a. Please give loaves of bread to the

people who follow me: Through Gideon, the call came to the people of the city of Succoth to support those who fought in the battle. They were not asked to engage in the actual battle, but simply to support those on the front lines.

b. Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hand, that we should give

bread to your army? Instead of help, the people of Succoth and Penuel had an excuse.

They didn't want to support Israel in the fight against Midian until the battle was won.

i. We can imagine that this was discouraging for Gideon and those fighting the battle.

They didn't ask the people of Succoth and Penuel to fight on the front lines, only to support those who did. Yet they were unwilling and made excuses. When we set out to do the LORD's work, often the resistance we face is from our friends. We can't let this hinder or discourage our work.

c. **When I come back in peace, I will tear down this tower!** Gideon knew he would win the battle, with or without the help of the people of Succoth and Penuel (**when I come back in peace**). Yet he vowed to take revenge on these cities that refused to help the army of Israel at this strategic time.

3. (10-12) Two Midianite kings and their armies are routed. Now Zebah and Zalmunna *were* at Karkor, and their armies with them, about fifteen thousand, all who were left of all the army of the people of the East; for one hundred and twenty thousand men who drew the sword had fallen. Then Gideon went up by the road of those who dwell in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah; and he attacked the army while the camp felt secure.

When Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued them; and he took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and routed the whole army.

a. **He attacked the army while the camp felt secure:** Gideon, continuing in the boldness of the LORD, led a courageous surprise attack.

This wasn't 300 attacking the vast army described in Jdg. 7:12, but it was still a small army against a much larger army.

i. We can suppose that Gideon was bold enough to do this because he saw God do great things in similar circumstances before.

The previous work of God encouraged him to trust God for great things in the present.

b. He pursued them . . . and routed the

whole army: This shows the *persistence* of Gideon. He fought until the battle was won, and he went after the leaders of the opposition.

4. (13-17) Gideon repays Succoth and Penuel.

Then Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle, from the Ascent of Heres. And he caught a young man of the men of Succoth and interrogated him; and he wrote down for him the leaders of Succoth and its elders, seventy-seven men. Then he came to the men of Succoth and

said, "Here are Zebah and Zalmunna, about whom you ridiculed me, saying, 'Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hand, that we should give bread to your weary men?'" And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth. Then he tore down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city.

a. He came to the men of Succoth and

said: The men of this city didn't want to help Gideon or his army before victory was assured.

They refused to help Gideon by *faith*, and so Gideon will punish them as he promised.

b. He took the elders of the city, and

thorns of the wilderness and briers, and

with them he taught the men of Succoth: Apparently Gideon publicly whipped the leaders of the city of Succoth with **thorns** and **briers** as a method of public rebuke.

c. He tore down the tower of Penuel and

killed the men of the city: The text does not make it clear, but we suppose there was a justification for this severe penalty. Perhaps the people of Penuel were significant supporters of the Midianites and traitors against Israel.

5. (18-21) Gideon repays the two Midianite kings.

And he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, "What kind of men *were they* whom you killed at Tabor?" So they answered, "As you *are*, so *were* they; each one resembled the son of a king." Then he said,

"They *were* my brothers, the sons of my mother.

As the LORD lives, if you had let them live, I would not kill you." And he said to Jether his firstborn, "Rise, kill them!"

But the youth would not draw his sword; for he was afraid, because he *was* still a youth. So Zebah and Zalmunna said,

"Rise yourself, and kill us; for as a man *is*, so *is* his strength."

So Gideon arose and killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and took the crescent

ornaments that *were* on their camels' necks.

a. **They were my brothers, the sons of my**

mother: Apparently these two Midianite kings were responsible for the death of Gideon's

brothers. Gideon wanted this known and confessed before he executed these kings.

b. **Rise yourself, and kill us:** Zebah and Zalmunna knew they deserved death and even

encouraged their executioner.

B. Israel under Gideon as a judge.

1. (22-23) Gideon refuses to be made king.

Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us, both you and your son, and your grandson also; for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian." But Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD shall rule over you."

a. **Ruler over us:** The desire for a human king over Israel started early in the nation's history.

Hundreds of years later - in the days of Samuel the prophet and judge - God will give Israel the king they ask for.

b. **I will not rule over you:** This was a good response from Gideon. He understood that it

was not his place to take the throne over Israel, and that the LORD God was king over Israel.

i. Though Gideon *said* he didn't want to be a king, in the rest of the chapter he acted like one. His words were humble but his actions

were not. It is easier to talk about humility and service to God than it is to actually live it.

2. (24-26) Gideon assumes a fortune.

Then Gideon said to them, "I would like to make a request of you, that each of you would give me the earrings from his plunder." For they had gold earrings, because they *were* Ishmaelites. So they answered, "We will gladly give *them*." And they spread out a garment, and each man threw into it the earrings from his plunder. Now the weight of the gold earrings that he requested was one thousand seven hundred *shekels* of gold, besides the crescent ornaments, pendants, and purple robes which *were* on the kings of Midian, and besides the chains that *were* around their camels' necks.

a. **That each of you would give me the earrings from his plunder:** This didn't seem like much to ask for, yet when it was added up, it came to more than 50 pounds of gold. This was quite a fortune.

b. **We will gladly give them:** The people were happy to give this, and it is hard to say that Gideon did not *deserve* this huge fortune.

At the same time it was inappropriate, because it lifted him far above the level of the people he would lead, and it was at their expense.

i. A general rule of thumb is that Christian leaders who make their living from the gifts of God's people should live at the level of

their own people - not below or above.

3. (27) Gideon, using the riches he received, assumes an inappropriate role of religious leadership and leads Israel into idolatry.

Then Gideon made it into an ephod and set it up in his city, Ophrah. And all Israel played the harlot with it there. It became a snare to Gideon and to his house.

a. **Gideon made it into an ephod and set it up in his city:** This was obviously wrong and it is not immediately apparent why Gideon did

this. It is possible he did this to work against the prestige and influence of the tribe of

Ephraim. At this time the tabernacle - the center of worship for Israel - was at Shiloh, in the territory of Ephraim. Gideon perhaps set up this rival place of worship to compete against the tribe that troubled him in the battle against Midian.

b. **And all Israel played the harlot with it there:** The people of Israel *enjoyed* this idolatrous worship. The beautiful and expensive ephod **became a snare** to Gideon, his family, and all Israel.

i. Artistic beauty has a way of impressing us and giving a sense of awe but it is not

necessarily a godly impression or awe. Many

times it can distract our focus from the

LORD. In contrast to this ephod, God

commanded that His altars be made of

unfinished stone (Exo. 20:25), so that no

one's attention was focused on the beauty of the stone carver's work.

ii. This **snare** came from a sincere man who commanded the attention of the nation. But

sincerity is not an accurate measure of the

truth. In November of 1994, a North

Carolina woman displayed her seemingly

sincere grief to the entire country over her children who had supposedly been

kidnapped in a carjacking - until it was

discovered that she had murdered her two

young boys herself by driving them into a

lake. Almost the entire nation was transfixed by her story, but it was all a lie.

4. (28-30) Gideon assumes a kingly harem.

Thus Midian was subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted their heads no more.

And the country was quiet for forty years in the days of Gideon. Then Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house. Gideon had

seventy sons who were his own offspring, for he had many wives.

a. **Thus Midian was subdued:** Regarding the security of the nation, Gideon's rule as a judge over Israel was a success. Yet in many ways he was a spiritual failure.

b. **For he had many wives:** A harem was not only a reflection of a man's inability to control his sexual lust, it was also a way for him to proudly express his wealth, by saying "look at all the wives and children I can support."

i. The Old Testament never directly condemns polygamy (though the New Testament does in Mat. 19:4-6 and 1Ti.

3:2). Yet the Old Testament shows the bitter fruit of polygamy. The story of polygamous families in the Old Testament (such as with Jacob or David) is the story of conflict and crisis.

5. (31-32) Gideon assumes a hereditary rulership.

And his concubine who was in Shechem also bore him a son, whose name he called Abimelech.

Now Gideon the son of Joash died at a good old age, and was buried in the tomb of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

a. **Whose name he called Abimelech:** The name **Abimelech** means "My father, a king."

Gideon intended that his son would become the leader of Israel after Gideon himself was gone.

b. **Gideon the son of Joash died at a good old age:** Through his career, we see Gideon as a man who slipped

from great heights of faith to a place of outright apostasy and rebellion

against God. We could say that Gideon handled adversity better than success. Success, riches, and prominence brought him down.

i. It isn't enough for us to begin well with God. We must continue on throughout our

whole Christian life. Gideon, in his later

years, had to *look back* to see anything done for God. All those works were in the past.

ii. "Perhaps it is easier to honour God in some courageous action in the limelight of a time of national emergency than it is to

honour Him consistently in the ordinary,

everyday life, which requires a different kind of courage." (Cundall)

6. (33-35) After Gideon, Israel rebels and makes a covenant with Baal.

So it was, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals, and made Baal-Berith their god. Thus the children of Israel did not remember the LORD

their God, who had delivered them from the

hands of all their enemies on every side; nor did they show kindness to the house of Jerubbaal (Gideon) in accordance with the good he had

done for Israel.

a. **As soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals:** In a sense, Israel served the memory of Gideon well, especially the Gideon of his later years. By serving Baal, Israel said,

"what really matters is money and success," and in this they followed the example of Gideon in his later years.

b. **And made Baal-Berith their god:** The name **Baal-Berith** means "Baal of the Covenant." The Israelites sadly

regarded Baal as their "covenant god."

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2 He said to them, "Now what have I accomplished compared to you? Even Ephraim's leftover grapes are better quality than Abiezer's harvest! **3** It was to you that God handed over the Midianite generals, Oreb and Zeeb!

What did I accomplish to rival that?" When he said this, they calmed down.

4 Now Gideon and his three hundred men had crossed over the Jordan River, and even though they were exhausted, they were still chasing the Midianites. **5** He said to the men of Succoth, "Give some loaves of bread to the men who are following me, because they are exhausted. I am chasing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian." **6**

The officials of Succoth said, "You have not yet overpowered Zebah and Zalmunna. So why should we give bread to your army?" **7** Gideon said, "Since you will not help, after the LORD hands Zebah and Zalmunna over to me, I will thresh your skin with desert thorns and briers." **8**

He went up from there to Penuel and made the same request. The men of Penuel responded the same way the men of Succoth had. **9** He also threatened the men of Penuel, warning, "When I return victoriously, I will tear down this tower."

10 Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor with their armies. There were about fifteen thousand survivors from the army of the eastern peoples; a hundred and twenty thousand sword-wielding soldiers had been killed. **11**

Gideon went up the road of the nomads east of Nobah and Jogbehah and ambushed the surprised army. **12** When Zebah and Zalmunna ran away, Gideon chased them and captured the two Midianite kings, Zebah and Zalmunna.

He had surprised their entire army.

13 Gideon son of Joash returned from the battle by the pass of Heres. **14** He captured a young man from Succoth and

interrogated him. The young man wrote down for him the names of Succoth's officials and city leaders – seventy-seven men in all. **15** He approached the men of Succoth and said, "Look what I have! Zebah and Zalmunna! You insulted me, saying, 'You have not yet overpowered Zebah and Zalmunna. So why should we give bread to your exhausted men?'" **16** He seized the leaders of the city, along with some desert thorns and briers; he then

"threshed" the men of Succoth with them. **17** He also tore down the tower of Penuel and executed the city's men.

18 He said to Zebah and Zalmunna, "Describe for me the men you killed at Tabor." They said, "They were like you. Each one looked like a king's son." **19** He said, "They were my brothers, the sons of my mother. I swear, as surely as the LORD is alive, if you had let them live, I would not kill you."

20 He ordered Jether his firstborn son,

"Come on! Kill them!" But Jether was too afraid to draw his sword, because he was still young. **21** Zebah and Zalmunna said to Gideon, "Come on, you strike us, for a man is judged by his strength." So Gideon killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and he took the crescent-shaped ornaments which were on the necks of their camels.

22 The men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us – you, your son, and your grandson. For you have delivered us from Midian's power." **23** Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. The LORD

will rule over you." **24** Gideon continued, "I would like to make one request. Each of you give me an earring from the plunder you have taken." (The Midianites had gold earrings because they were Ishmaelites.) **25** They said,

"We are happy to give you earrings." So they spread out a garment, and each one threw an earring from his plunder onto it. **26** The total weight of the gold earrings he requested came to seventeen hundred gold shekels. This was in addition to the crescent-shaped ornaments, jewelry, purple clothing worn by the Midianite kings, and the

necklaces on the camels. **27** Gideon used all this to make an ephod, which he put in his hometown of Ophrah.

All the Israelites prostituted themselves to it by worshiping it there. It became a snare to Gideon and his family.

28 The Israelites humiliated Midian; the Midianites' fighting spirit was broken. The land had rest for forty years during Gideon's time. **29** Then Jerub-Baal son of Joash went home and settled down. **30** Gideon fathered seventy sons through his many wives. **31** His concubine, who lived in Shechem, also gave him a son, whom he named Abimelech. **32** Gideon son of Joash died at a very old age and was buried in the tomb of his father Joash located in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

33 After Gideon died, the Israelites again prostituted themselves to the Baals. They made Baal-Berith their god.

34 The Israelites did not remain true to the LORD their God, who had delivered them from all the enemies who lived around them. **35** They did not treat the family of Jerub-Baal (that is, Gideon) fairly in return for all the good he had done for Israel.

1 Now Abimelech son of Jerub-Baal went to Shechem to see his mother's relatives. He said to them and to his mother's entire extended family,

Guzik - Judges 9:1-57

Judges 9 - The Rise and Fall of Abimelech

A. Abimelech's rise to power.

1. (1-3) Abimelech forces his brothers to submit to him.

Then Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem, to his mother's brothers, and spoke with them and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying, "Please speak in the hearing of all the men of Shechem: 'Which is better for you, that all seventy of the sons of Jerubbaal reign over you, or that one reign over you?' Remember that I *am* your own flesh and bone." And his mother's brothers spoke all these words concerning him in the hearing of all the men of Shechem; and their heart

was inclined to follow Abimelech, for they said, "He is our brother."

a. Then Abimelech the Son of Jerubbaal

went to Shechem: Abimelech was the son of **Jerubbaal** (another name for Gideon given in Jdg. 8:35), but he was not the clear successor to his father's place of leadership. This was for two reasons: God had not established a hereditary monarchy in Israel, and there were sixty-nine other sons of Gideon (Jdg. 8:30) who might also want to succeed their father.

b. Their heart was inclined to follow

Abimelech: At the city of Shechem, Abimelech convinced his brothers on his mother's side to support him as king over his brothers on his father's (Gideon's) side. So, the **men of Shechem** agreed to accept Abimelech as the new leader - perhaps even the king - of Israel.

2. (4-5) Abimelech repays the trust of his brothers with a massacre.

So they gave him seventy *shekels* of silver from the temple of Baal-Berith, with which Abimelech hired worthless and reckless men; and they

followed him. Then he went to his father's house at Ophrah and killed his brothers, the seventy sons of Jerubbaal, on one stone. But Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left, because he hid himself.

a. So they gave him seventy shekels of

silver from the temple of Baal-Berith: The half-brothers of Abimelech gave him some

"start-up money" to establish his leadership. He did this, but in a way that they never imagined -

he hired **worthless and reckless men** to kill all his brothers on his father's side, to make certain there would never be a challenger to his leadership.

i. From the temple of Baal-Berith:

Abimelech received his pay from the temple

dedicated to Baal. "A work begun under the name and influence of the devil is not likely to end to the glory of God, or to the welfare of man." (Clarke).

b. Killed his brothers, the seventy sons of Jerubbaal:

Therefore Abimelech killed his half-brothers on his father's side with the support of the half-brothers on his mother's side. The *men of Shechem* supported the plan because it was good *for them* - not because it was morally good or right.

3. (6) The men of Shechem make Abimelech their king.

And all the men of Shechem gathered together, all of Beth Millo, and they went and made

Abimelech king beside the terebinth tree at the pillar that *was* in Shechem.

a. They went and made Abimelech king: It is almost hard to tell who is worse - Abimelech who did the murdering, or the men of Shechem who approved of it. This was an ungodly leader given to an ungodly people, who first rejected God's leadership over the nation and then embraced a cruel and brutal man.

b. Beside the terebinth tree at the pillar that was in Shechem: Ironically, Abimelech's coronation took place at the same tree where Joshua had solemnly placed a copy of the law of God (Jos. 24:26). The law was right there, but Israel refused to read or heed it.

B. Jotham's warning.

1. (7-15) The parable of the trees.

Now when they told Jotham, he went and stood on top of Mount Gerizim, and lifted his voice and cried out. And he said to them: "Listen to me, you men of Shechem, that God may listen to you!

The trees once went forth to anoint a king over them. And they said to the olive tree, 'Reign over us!' But the olive tree said to them, 'Should I cease giving my oil, with which they honor God and men, and go to sway over trees?' Then the trees said to the fig tree, 'You come *and* reign over us!' But

the fig tree said to them, 'Should I cease my sweetness and my good fruit, and go to sway over trees?' Then the trees said to the vine,

'You come *and* reign over us!' But the vine said to them, 'Should I cease my new wine, which

cheers *both* God and men, and go to sway over trees?' Then all the trees said to the bramble,

'You come *and* reign over us!' And the bramble said to the trees, 'If in truth you anoint me as king over you, *then* come *and* take shelter in my shade; but if not, let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon!'

a. **Now when they told Jotham:** Jotham was the only son of Gideon to escape the massacre at the stone (Jdg. 9:5). Here he told a parable to rebuke the men of Shechem for their choice of Abimelech as a king.

b. **The trees once went forth to anoint a**

king over them: In the parable, the worthy trees (the olive, the fig, and the vine) didn't want to be king. But the unworthy bramble agreed to be king.

c. **Let fire come out of the bramble and**

devour the cedars of Lebanon: The bramble warned that he would be an oppressive ruler and destroy anyone who disagreed with him.

i. One test of the character of a man is to see how he treats those who disagree with him. If his only desire is to destroy those who disagree, then he is much like the bramble - plenty of good points, but no real substance for good.

2. (16-21) Jotham applies the parable: the city of Shechem will be repaid for choosing such a worthless man.

"Now therefore, if you have acted in truth and sincerity in making Abimelech king, and if you have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done to him as he

deserves; for my father fought for you, risked his life, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian; but you have risen up against my father's house this day, and killed his seventy sons on one stone, and made Abimelech, the son of his female servant, king over the men of Shechem, because he is your brother; if then you have acted in truth and sincerity with

Jerubbaal and with his house this day, *then* rejoice in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you. But if not, let fire come from Abimelech and devour the men of Shechem and Beth Millo; and let fire come from the men of Shechem and from Beth Millo and devour Abimelech!" And Jotham ran away and fled; and he went to Beer and dwelt there, for fear of Abimelech his brother.

a. **Because he is your brother:** The real reason the men of Shechem supported

Abimelech was because he was their **brother**.

Abimelech's mother, though only a **female servant** to Gideon, was from Shechem.

Abimelech probably grew up in Shechem (Jdg. 8:31).

b. **Let fire come from Abimelech and devour the men of Shechem:** Jotham's

warning to the men of Shechem was that their unwise choice will come back to hurt them. He predicted that " **fire**" would come forth from Abimelech and devour them.

C. Jotham's warning fulfilled.

1. (22-24) Summary: God judges both the city of Shechem and Abimelech.

After Abimelech had reigned over Israel three years, God sent a spirit of ill will between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the

men of Shechem dealt treacherously with

Abimelech, that the crime *done* to the seventy sons of Jerubbaal might be settled and their blood be laid on

Abimelech their brother, who killed them, and on the men of Shechem, who

aided him in the killing of his brothers. And the men of Shechem set men in ambush against him on the tops of the mountains, and they robbed all who passed by them along that way; and it was told Abimelech.

a. God sent a spirit of ill will between Abimelech and the men of Shechem:

Everything seemed fine between the men of Shechem and Abimelech for three years. Then, in judgment, God removed the peace that was between them and sent this **spirit of ill will**.

b. Set men in ambush: Prompted by the **spirit of ill will**, the men of Shechem set ambushes on the mountain roads, hoping to disrupt the trade routes that profited Abimelech.

2. (25-49) Judgment comes to the city of Shechem.

Now Gaal the son of Ebed came with his brothers and went over to Shechem; and the men of

Shechem put their confidence in him. So they went out into the fields, and gathered *grapes* from their vineyards and trod *them*, and made merry. And they went into the house of their god, and ate and drank, and cursed Abimelech. Then Gaal the son of Ebed said, "Who *is* Abimelech, and who *is* Shechem, that we should serve him?

Is he not the son of Jerubbaal, and *is not* Zebul his officer? Serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem; but why should we serve him? If only this people were under my authority! Then I

would remove Abimelech." So he said to

Abimelech, "Increase your army and come out!"

When Zebul, the ruler of the city, heard the words of Gaal the son of Ebed, his anger was aroused. And he sent messengers to Abimelech secretly, saying, "Take note! Gaal the son of Ebed and his brothers have come to Shechem; and

here they are, fortifying the city against you. Now therefore, get up by night, you and the people who *are* with you, and lie in wait in the field. And it shall be, as soon as the sun is up in the morning, *that* you shall rise early and rush upon the city; and *when* he and the people who are with him come out against you, you may then do to them as you find opportunity." So Abimelech and all the people who *were* with him rose by night, and lay in wait against Shechem in four companies. When Gaal the son of Ebed went out and stood in the entrance to the city gate,

Abimelech and the people who *were* with him rose from lying in wait. And when Gaal saw the people, he said to Zebul, "Look, people are coming down from the tops of the mountains!"

But Zebul said to him, "You see the shadows of the mountains as *if they were* men." So Gaal spoke again and said, "See, people are coming down from the center of the land, and another company is coming from the Diviners' Terebinth Tree." Then Zebul said to him, "Where indeed *is* your mouth now, with which you said, 'Who is Abimelech, that we should serve him?' *Are* not these the people whom you despised? Go out, if you will, and fight with them now."

So Gaal went out, leading the men of Shechem, and fought with Abimelech. And Abimelech chased him, and he fled from him; and many fell wounded, to the *very* entrance of the gate. Then Abimelech dwelt at Arumah, and Zebul drove out Gaal and his

brothers, so that they would not dwell in

Shechem. And it came about on the next day that the people went out into the field, and they told Abimelech. So he took his people, divided them into three companies, and lay in wait in the field.

And he looked, and there were the people, coming out of the city; and he rose against them and attacked them. Then Abimelech and the

company that *was* with him rushed forward and stood at the entrance of the gate of the city; and the *other* two companies rushed upon all who *were* in the fields and killed them. So Abimelech fought against the city all that day; he took the city and killed the people who *were* in it; and he demolished the city and sowed it with salt. Now when all the men of the tower of Shechem had heard *that*, they entered the stronghold of the temple of the god Berith. And it was told

Abimelech that all the men of the tower of Shechem were gathered together. Then

Abimelech went up to Mount Zalmon, he and all the people who *were* with him. And Abimelech took an ax in his hand and cut down a bough

from the trees, and took it and laid *it* on his shoulder; then he said to the people who were with him, "What you have seen me do, make haste *and* do as I *have done*." So each of the people likewise cut down his own bough and followed Abimelech, put *them* against the stronghold, and set the stronghold on fire above them, so that all the people of the tower of Shechem died, about a thousand men and women.

a. The men of Shechem put their

confidence in him: The men of Shechem lost their confidence in Abimelech, so they chose a new leader named Gaal, the son of Ebed.

b. They went into the house of their god, and ate and drank, and cursed Abimelech: The men of Shechem were so confident that

their new leader Gaal could protect them against Abimelech that they started throwing drunken parties and openly cursing Abimelech.

c. When Zebul, the ruler of the city, heard the words of Gaal the son of Ebed, his

anger was aroused: Zebul, the "city manager"

on behalf of Abimelech, told Abimelech all about Gaal and this rebellion. Zebul advised Abimelech to come and attack the city.

d. **Zebul said to him, "You see the shadows of the mountains as if they were men"** : Zebul deceived Gaal, allowing Abimelech's troops to take position. With the advantage of their superior position, Abimelech and his soldiers drove out Gaal and his men.

e. **He took the city and killed the people who were in it; and he demolished the city and sowed it with salt:** Abimelech then turned his fury against the people of Shechem, and killed as many of them as he could, and he demolished their city.

i. This shows the problem of following a man who comes to power through violence. It is only a matter of time until he turns the same violence against you.

f. **All the people of the tower of Shechem died, about a thousand men and women:** The only survivors in the city of Shechem took refuge in a tower but Abimelech burnt them out and killed them all, about a thousand men and women. Even a secure tower could not protect them.

i. There is a more secure tower than the tower of Shechem. *The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe* (Pro. 18:10). *For You have been a shelter for me, a strong tower from the enemy.* (Psa. 61:3).

3. (50-55) God's judgment on Abimelech.

Then Abimelech went to Thebez, and he encamped against Thebez and took it. But there was a strong tower in the city, and all the men and women; all the people of the city; fled there and shut themselves in; then they went up to the top of the tower. So Abimelech came as far as the tower and fought against it; and he drew near the door of the tower to burn it with fire.

But a certain woman dropped an upper millstone on Abimelech's head and crushed his skull. Then he called quickly to the young man, his armorbearer, and said to him, "Draw your sword and kill me, lest men say of me, 'A woman killed him.' " So his young man thrust him through, and he died. And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed, every man to his place.

a. **Abimelech came as far as the tower and fought against it:** After his brutal victory at the tower of Shechem, Abimelech probably thought he was an expert at "tower attack." He went to **Thebez** and attacked the city and the tower there.

b. **A certain woman dropped an upper millstone on Abimelech's head and crushed his skull:** At Thebez, a woman dropped a millstone on Abimelech's head and mortally wounded him.

i. This was probably a stone used to grind grain by hand. "Such hand-stones averaged ten to fourteen inches long and weighed five pounds or more." (Wood)

c. **"Draw your sword and kill me, lest men say of me, 'A woman killed him.' "**

Abimelech considered it more "manly" to be killed by his own armor bearer; but he was still dead afterward. Proud even in death, he then had to answer to God for his wicked actions.

4. (56-57) Summation: The certainty of God's judgments.

Thus God repaid the wickedness of Abimelech, which he had done to his father by killing his seventy brothers. And all the evil of the men of Shechem God returned on their own heads, and on them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal.

a. **Thus God repaid the wickedness of**

Abimelech: We can be certain that God will repay wickedness, either in this life or the life to come. Usually He

finds a way to do it *both* in this life and the life to come.

b. On them came the curse of Jotham the

son of Jerubbaal: God had warned the men of Shechem through Jotham. Yet they rejected the warning of God, and therefore came to ruin.

i. We should each consider if God is warning us about something in the present time. The story of Abimelech, the men of Shechem, and Jotham shows us that there is a real and terrible price to pay for rejecting God's warnings.

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2 “Tell all the leaders of Shechem this: ‘Why would you want to have seventy men, all Jerub-Baal’s sons, ruling over you, when you can have just one ruler? Recall that I am your own flesh and blood.’” **3** His mother’s relatives spoke on his behalf to all the leaders of Shechem and reported his proposal. The leaders were drawn to Abimelech; they said, “He is our close relative.” **4** They paid him seventy silver shekels out of the temple of Baal-Berith. Abimelech then used the silver to hire some lawless, dangerous men as his followers. **5** He went to his father’s home in Ophrah and murdered his half-brothers, the seventy legitimate sons of Jerub-Baal, on one stone.

Only Jotham, Jerub-Baal’s youngest son, escaped, because he hid. **6** All the leaders of Shechem and Beth Millo assembled and then went and made Abimelech king by the oak near the pillar in Shechem.

7 When Jotham heard the news, he went and stood on the top of Mount Gerizim. He spoke loudly to the people below, “Listen to me, leaders of Shechem, so that God may listen to you!

8 “The trees were determined to go out and choose a king for themselves. They said to the olive tree, ‘Be our king!’ **9** But the olive tree said to them, ‘I am not going to stop

producing my oil, which is used to honor gods and men, just to sway above the other trees!’

10 “So the trees said to the fig tree, ‘You come and be our king!’ **11** But the fig tree said to them, ‘I am not going to stop producing my sweet figs, my excellent fruit, just to sway above the other trees!’

12 “So the trees said to the grapevine, ‘You come and be our king!’ **13** But the grapevine said to them, ‘I am not going to stop producing my wine, which makes gods and men so happy, just to sway above the other trees!’

14 “So all the trees said to the thornbush, ‘You come and be our king!’ **15** The thornbush said to the trees, ‘If you really want to choose me as your king, then come along, find safety under my branches! Otherwise may fire blaze from the thornbush and consume the cedars of Lebanon!’

16 “Now, if you have shown loyalty and integrity when you made Abimelech king, if you have done right to Jerub-Baal and his family, if you have properly repaid him – **17**

my father fought for you; he risked his life and delivered you from Midian’s power. **18** But you have attacked my father’s family today. You murdered his seventy legitimate sons on one stone and made Abimelech, the son of his female slave, king over the leaders of Shechem, just because he is your close relative. **19** So if you have shown loyalty and integrity to Jerub-Baal and his family today, then may Abimelech bring you happiness and may you bring him happiness! **20** But if not, may fire blaze from Abimelech and consume the leaders of Shechem and Beth Millo! May fire also blaze from the leaders of Shechem and Beth Millo and consume Abimelech!” **21** Then Jotham ran away to Beer and lived there to escape from Abimelech his half-brother.

22 Abimelech commanded Israel for three years. **23** God sent a spirit to stir up hostility between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem. He made the leaders of Shechem disloyal to Abimelech. **24** He did this so the violent deaths of Jerub-Baal’s seventy sons might be avenged and

Abimelech, their half-brother who murdered them, might have to pay for their spilled blood, along with the leaders of Shechem who helped him murder them. **25** The leaders of Shechem rebelled against Abimelech by putting bandits in the hills, who robbed everyone who traveled by on the road. But Abimelech found out about it.

26 Gaal son of Ebed came through Shechem with his brothers. The leaders of Shechem transferred their loyalty to him. **27** They went out to the field, harvested their grapes, squeezed out the juice, and celebrated. They came to the temple of their god and ate, drank, and cursed Abimelech.

28 Gaal son of Ebed said, "Who is Abimelech and who is Shechem, that we should serve him? Is he not the son of Jerub-Baal, and is not Zebul the deputy he appointed? Serve the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem! But why should we serve Abimelech? **29** If only these men were under my command, I would get rid of Abimelech!" He challenged Abimelech, "Mustering your army and come out for battle!"

30 When Zebul, the city commissioner, heard the words of Gaal son of Ebed, he was furious. **31** He sent messengers to Abimelech, who was in Arumah, reporting,

"Beware! Gaal son of Ebed and his brothers are coming to Shechem and inciting the city to rebel against you. **32**

Now, come up at night with your men and set an ambush in the field outside the city. **33** In the morning at sunrise quickly attack the city. When he and his men come out to fight you, do what you can to him."

34 So Abimelech and all his men came up at night and set an ambush outside Shechem – they divided into four units.

35 When Gaal son of Ebed came out and stood at the entrance to the city's gate, Abimelech and his men got up from their hiding places. **36** Gaal saw the men and said to Zebul, "Look, men are coming down from the tops of the hills."

But Zebul said to him, "You are seeing the shadows on the hills – it just looks like men." **37** Gaal again said, "Look, men are coming down from the very center of the land. A

unit is coming by way of the Oak Tree of the Diviners.” **38** Zebul said to him, “Where now are your bragging words, ‘Who is Abimelech that we should serve him?’ Are these not the men you insulted? Go out now and fight them!” **39** So Gaal led the leaders of Shechem out and fought Abimelech. **40** Abimelech chased him, and Gaal ran from him. Many Shechemites fell wounded at the entrance of the gate. **41** Abimelech went back to Arumah; Zebul drove Gaal and his brothers out of Shechem.

42 The next day the Shechemites came out to the field. When Abimelech heard about it, **43** he took his men and divided them into three units and set an ambush in the field. When he saw the people coming out of the city, he attacked and struck them down. **44** Abimelech and his units attacked and blocked the entrance to the city’s gate.

Two units then attacked all the people in the field and struck them down. **45** Abimelech fought against the city all that day. He captured the city and killed all the people in it. Then he leveled the city and spread salt over it.

46 When all the leaders of the Tower of Shechem heard the news, they went to the stronghold of the temple of El-Berith.

47 Abimelech heard that all the leaders of the Tower of Shechem were in one place. **48** He and all his men went up on Mount Zalmon. He took an ax in his hand and cut off a tree branch. He put it on his shoulder and said to his men, “Quickly, do what you have just seen me do!” **49** So each of his men also cut off a branch and followed Abimelech. They put the branches against the stronghold and set fire to it. All the people of the Tower of Shechem died – about a thousand men and women.

50 Abimelech moved on to Thebez; he besieged and captured it. **51** There was a fortified tower in the center of the city, so all the men and women, as well as the city’s leaders, ran into it and locked the entrance. Then they went up to the roof of the tower. **52** Abimelech came and attacked the tower. When he approached the entrance of the tower to

set it on fire, **53** a woman threw an upper millstone down on his head and shattered his skull. **54** He quickly called to the young man who carried his weapons,

“Draw your sword and kill me, so they will not say, ‘A woman killed him.’” So the young man stabbed him and he died. **55** When the Israelites saw that Abimelech was dead, they went home.

56 God repaid Abimelech for the evil he did to his father by murdering his seventy half-brothers. **57** God also repaid the men of Shechem for their evil deeds. The curse spoken by Jotham son of Jerub-Baal fell on them.

1 After Abimelech’s death, Tola son of Puah, grandson of Dodo, from the tribe of Issachar, rose up to deliver Israel.

He lived in Shamir in the Ephraimite hill country.

Guzik - Judges 10:1-18

Judges 10 - Two Minor Judges and More

Oppression

A. Two "minor" judges.

1. (1-2) Tola.

After Abimelech there arose to save Israel Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in the

mountains of Ephraim. He judged Israel twenty-three years; and he died and was buried in Shamir.

a. **There arose to save Israel Tola:** We are not told much about the career of the judge Tola; only that his service as a judge lasted a relatively long time (**twenty-three years**).

2. (3-5) Jair.

After him arose Jair, a Gileadite; and he judged Israel twenty-two years. Now he had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys; they also had thirty towns, which are called "Havoth Jair" to this day, which *are* in the land of Gilead. And Jair died and was buried in Camon.

a. **After him arose Jair:** We also know little about Jair's service as a leader of Israel. We do know that he served for about the same number of years as Tola before him (**twenty-two years**).

b. **Now he had thirty sons who rode on**

thirty donkeys; they also had thirty towns: This shows that Jair was a polygamous man, and a man of wealth and prestige. His many

sons had fancy transportation and their own territory to rule. Jair never took the title of "king," but it seems that he acted like one.

B. Apostasy, servitude and supplication.

1. (6) Israel's seven-fold apostasy.

Then the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the

people of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; and they forsook the LORD and did not serve Him.

a. **Then the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD:** This phrase is repeated seven times in the Book of Judges. It shows that the evil of Israel was even worse because they did it before the eyes of God. We could say that it is bad to commit adultery, but it is far more offensive to commit adultery before the eyes of your spouse.

b. **And served the Baals and the**

Ashtoreths: The essence of Israel's sin was that they **served** other gods. Here, seven different ethnic and national gods are mentioned that Israel went after.

i. Israel was attracted to these other gods not because of the beauty of an idol image, but because of what was associated with the pagan deity. Baal, the weather god, was associated with financial success. Ashtoreth, the goddess of fertility, was associated with love, sex, and romance. As for the other gods of the neighboring nations around them, it was a matter of "going with the flow" and doing what everyone else did.

ii. Israel's worship of neighboring gods reminds us that the people of God are often in danger of worshipping what the world worships.

c. **They forsook the LORD and did not**

serve Him: Perhaps Israel did not *consciously* forsake God. Yet adding the worship of pagan gods to the worship of the true God was to forsake the LORD. It seems that Israel was willing to worship just about anything *except* the true God. When a man stops believing in God, he does not believe in nothing; he believes in anything.

2. (7-9) Israel's servitude.

So the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the people of Ammon.

From that year they harassed and oppressed the children of Israel for eighteen years; all the children of Israel who *were* on the other side of the Jordan in the land of the Amorites, in Gilead.

Moreover the people of Ammon crossed over the Jordan to fight against Judah also, against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim, so that Israel was severely distressed.

a. He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the

people of Ammon: If Israel wanted to serve the gods of the Philistines and the Amorites, God would allow them. He allowed them in the fullest sense, by selling them into servitude to the Philistines and Amorites.

b. They harassed and oppressed the

children of Israel: Of course, Israel was never *blessed* when they served these other gods. Instead, they were **harassed and oppressed**; they were **severely distressed** -

but God gave them what they wanted.

3. (10-14) Israel calls to the LORD; God's response to Israel.

And the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, saying, "We have sinned against You, because we have both forsaken our God and served the Baals!" So the LORD said to the children of Israel, "*Did I not deliver you* from the Egyptians and from the Amorites and from the people of Ammon and from the Philistines? Also the Sidonians and Amalekites and Maonites oppressed you; and you cried out to Me, and I delivered you from their hand. Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods. Therefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in your time of distress."

a. Therefore I will deliver you no more: God was harsh with Israel because they had to be genuinely sick of their sin before they would genuinely turn to God. God allowed Israel to experience the sickness of their sin.

i. One technique used to help people stop

smoking is to put them in a small, unventilated room and make them smoke for hours on end, until they can hardly bear it. It makes them sick of smoking, and makes them truly want to stop. In the same way, sometimes God will allow the natural consequences of our sin to crash upon us in concentrated form, so we can become sick of our sin.

b. **We have sinned against You:** The *words* of this cry seem fine, but God's response seems to indicate that He saw something lacking in Israel's repentance. One may cry out to the LORD, yet really just *wish* things were different.

Crying out to God with the voice is not necessarily the same as crying out to Him with our heart.

i. God wanted from Israel the same thing He wants from us - a heart that will put its hand to the plow and not look back (Luk. 9:62).

He wants us to come to the place where we know that there is nothing worth following except God.

4. (15-16) Repentance from Israel, mercy from God.

And the children of Israel said to the LORD, "We have sinned! Do to us whatever seems best to You; only deliver us this day, we pray." So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the LORD. And His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel.

a. **Do to us whatever seems best to You:** This indicates that Israel came to a place of total surrender to God. By nature our prayer is, "Do to me whatever seems best to me." The change in heart means that the season of affliction eventually did affect Israel in a good way.

b. **So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the LORD:** Israel finally discovered that the *worst* of serving God is better than the *best* of serving idols.

c. His soul could no longer endure the

misery of Israel: God looked upon disobedient Israel with compassion, not hatred. It was "difficult" for God to allow Israel to stay in their misery, though it was best for them. Like the perfect loving parent, God hated to see Israel suffer, even when it was good for them. He longed to rescue them but would not do it until it was *good* for them.

5. (17-18) Israel gathers, but without a leader.

Then the people of Ammon gathered together and encamped in Gilead. And the children of Israel assembled together and encamped in Mizpah. And the people, the leaders of Gilead, said to one another, "Who *is* the man who will begin the fight against the people of Ammon? He shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead."

a. The children of Israel assembled

together and encamped in Mizpah: In

response to the Ammonite threat, Israel gathered together for defense.

b. Who is the man who will begin the fight against the people of Ammon? Israel gathered, but had no leader.

God's pattern for doing great works among His people is to raise up a man. He could do the work all by Himself; He could send angels to do the work for Him.

But God's normal means of operating is to raise up a man, and through that man to do a great work. God uses leaders.

© 2003 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** He led Israel for twenty-three years, then died and was buried in Shamir.

3 Jair the Gileadite rose up after him; he led Israel for twenty-two years. **4** He had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys and possessed thirty cities. To this day these towns are called Havvoth Jair – they are in the land of Gilead. **5** Jair died and was buried in Kamon.

6 The Israelites again did evil in the LORD's sight. They worshiped the Baals and the Ashtars, as well as the gods of

Syria, Sidon, Moab, the Ammonites, and the Philistines.

They abandoned the LORD and did not worship him. **7** The LORD was furious with Israel and turned them over to the Philistines and Ammonites. **8** They ruthlessly oppressed the Israelites that eighteenth year – that is, all the Israelites living east of the Jordan in Amorite country in Gilead. **9**

The Ammonites crossed the Jordan to fight with Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim. Israel suffered greatly.

10 The Israelites cried out for help to the LORD: “We have sinned against you. We abandoned our God and worshiped the Baals.” **11** The LORD said to the Israelites, “Did I not deliver you from Egypt, the Amorites, the Ammonites, the Philistines, **12** the Sidonians, Amalek, and Midian when they oppressed you? You cried out for help to me, and I delivered you from their power. **13** But since you abandoned me and worshiped other gods, I will not deliver you again. **14** Go and cry for help to the gods you have chosen! Let them deliver you from trouble!” **15** But the Israelites said to the LORD, “We have sinned. You do to us as you see fit, but deliver us today!” **16** They threw away the foreign gods they owned and worshiped the LORD. Finally the LORD grew tired of seeing Israel suffer so much.

17 The Ammonites assembled and camped in Gilead; the Israelites gathered together and camped in Mizpah. **18**

The leaders of Gilead said to one another, “Who is willing to lead the charge against the Ammonites? He will become the leader of all who live in Gilead!”

1 Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a brave warrior. His mother was a prostitute, but Gilead was his father.

Guzik - Judges 11:1-40

Judges 11 - Jephthah and the Ammonites

A. Jephthah negotiates with the Ammonites.

1. (1-3) Jephthah's background before his rise to leadership. Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valor, but he *was* the son of a harlot; and Gilead begot Jephthah. Gilead's wife bore sons; and when his wife's sons grew up,

they drove Jephthah out, and said to him, "You shall have no inheritance in our father's house, for you *are* the son of another woman." Then Jephthah fled from his brothers and dwelt in the land of Tob; and worthless men banded together with Jephthah and went out *raiding* with him.

a. **Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a**

mighty man of valor: This brave and notable man in Israel had a clouded pedigree. His mother was a **harlot**, a common heathen prostitute.

b. **Worthless men banded together with**

Jephthah and went out raiding with him: Jephthah wasn't necessarily the leader of a band of criminals. Adam Clarke explains that the term **worthless men** doesn't necessarily mean a bandit: "The word may, however, mean in this place *poor persons*, without property, and without employment."

i. Jephthah and his band probably operated more in the manner of David and his men during the period described in 1Sa. 25:4-8, protecting cities and settlements from marauders and receiving pay from those whom they helped.

2. (4-11) Jephthah assumes the leadership of Gilead.

It came to pass after a time that the people of Ammon made war against Israel. And so it was, when the people of Ammon made war against Israel, that the elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah from the land of Tob. Then they said to Jephthah, "Come and be our commander, that we may fight against the people of Ammon." So Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, "Did you not hate me, and expel me from my father's house? Why have you come to me now when you

are in distress?" And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "That is why we have turned again to you now, that you may go with us and fight against the people of Ammon, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead." So Jephthah

said to the elders of Gilead, "If you take me back home to fight against the people of Ammon, and the LORD delivers them to me, shall I be your head?" And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "The LORD will be a witness between us, if we do not do according to your words." Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and commander over them; and Jephthah spoke all his words before the LORD in Mizpah.

a. The people of Ammon made war against

Israel: The nation of Ammon, the Ammonites, lived to the south of Israel. They were a semi-nomadic group of people who descended from Abraham's nephew Lot.

b. Come and be our commander, that we

may fight against the people of Ammon: Because of the crisis of the Ammonites, the leaders of Gilead were desperate for an able leader, and they turned to Jephthah. They gave him the authority as **head** over Gilead.

3. (12-28) Jephthah negotiates with the king of the Ammonites.

Now Jephthah sent messengers to the king of the people of Ammon, saying, "What do you have against me, that you have come to fight against me in my land?" And the king of the people of Ammon answered the messengers of Jephthah, "Because Israel took away my land when they came up out of Egypt, from the Arnon as far as the Jabbok, and to the Jordan. Now therefore, restore those *lands* peaceably." So Jephthah again sent messengers to the king of the people of Ammon, and said to him, "Thus says Jephthah: 'Israel did not take away the land of Moab, nor the land of the people of Ammon; for when Israel came up from Egypt, they walked through the wilderness as far as the Red Sea and came to Kadesh. Then Israel sent messengers to the king of Edom, saying, "Please let me pass through your land." But the king of Edom would not heed. And in like manner they sent to the king of Moab, but he would not *consent*. So Israel remained in Kadesh. And they went along through the wilderness and

bypassed the land of Edom and the land of Moab, came to the east side of the land of Moab, and encamped on the other side of the Arnon. But they did not enter the border of Moab, for the Arnon *was* the border of Moab. Then Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, king of Heshbon; and Israel said to him, "Please let us pass through your land into our place." But Sihon did not trust Israel to pass through his territory. So Sihon gathered all his people together, encamped in Jahaz, and fought against Israel. And the LORD God of Israel delivered Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they defeated them. Thus Israel gained possession of all the land of the Amorites, who inhabited that country. They took possession of all the territory of the Amorites, from the Arnon to the Jabbok and from the wilderness to the Jordan. And now the LORD God of Israel has dispossessed the Amorites from before His people Israel; should you then possess it? Will you not possess whatever Chemosh your god gives you to possess? So whatever the LORD our God takes possession of before us, we will possess. And now, *are* you any better than Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab? Did he ever strive against Israel? Did he ever fight against them? While Israel dwelt in Heshbon and its villages, in Aroer and its villages, and in all the cities along the banks of the Arnon, for three hundred years, why did you not recover *them* within that time?

Therefore I have not sinned against you, but you wronged me by fighting against me. May the LORD, the Judge, render judgment this day

between the children of Israel and the people of Ammon.' "

However, the king of the people of Ammon did not heed the words which Jephthah sent him.

a. What do you have against me, that you have come to fight against me in my land?

Jephthah asked a simple question: why are you in the land of Israel? The king of Ammon gave a simple reply: because it is really our land, and Israel took it from us unjustly.

b. Israel did not take away the land of Moab, nor the land of the people of

Ammon: Jephthah's written response to the King of the Ammonites carefully explained why Israel had a right to the land that the Ammonites claimed was theirs.

i. Thus Israel gained possession of all the land of the Amorites, who

inhabited that country: They Amorites conquered the Ammonites and took control of their land. When Israel defeated the

Amorites in battle, they justly took the land of the Amorites - which also happened to be the previous land of the Ammonites. The

war against the Amorites was prompted by the vicious Amorite war against Israeli civilians.

ii. And now the LORD God of Israel has

dispossessed the Amorites from before

His people Israel; should you then

possess it? Since God gave this land to Israel, the Ammonites have no claim over it.

iii. **Will you not possess whatever**

Chemosh your god gives you to

possess? The Ammonite god Chemosh must show himself worthy to conquer the

land of Israel. Since Israel held this land **for three hundred years**, it demonstrates that Chemosh was not greater than the God of Israel. This is an inherent challenge: "If your god is mighty enough to give you the land, then let him do it. Let us see who is stronger

- Yahweh or Chemosh."

iv. Jephthah did not see this battle as primarily between two armies, but between the God of Israel and the false god of Ammon. Jephthah showed true wisdom in seeing this as a spiritual battle *first*.

c. **Chemosh your god:** Chemosh was traditionally the god of the Moabites, not the Ammonites. But they may have worshipped each other's gods, and they may also have considered Chemosh and Milcom to be the same god with different names.

B. Victory and a vow.

1. (29) Jephthah gathers troops and advances courageously on Ammon.

Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed through Gilead and

Manasseh, and passed through Mizpah of Gilead; and from Mizpah of Gilead he advanced *toward* the people of Ammon.

a. **Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah:**

This was the source of Jephthah's courage. When we are beset by fears and anxieties, we need to fill our lives with Jesus and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

b. **He advanced toward the people of**

Ammon: The filling of the Spirit makes us **advance**. We go forward in the sense of spiritual progress and we go forward in the sense of confronting the enemies of God.

2. (30-31) Jephthah makes a rash vow, thinking it will help his cause before God.

And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD, and said, "If You will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands, then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering."

a. **Jephthah made a vow to the LORD:** Though well intentioned, this was a foolish vow.

Such vows can be attempts to get God "on our side." It is far more important to be on God's side than to try and persuade Him to be on your side.

i. Even a Spirit-filled man can do foolish things. The Holy Spirit does not overwhelm and control us, He guides us - and that guidance can be resisted or ignored at smaller or greater points.

b. **Whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me . . . I will offer it up as a burnt offering:**

Jephthah did not have a human sacrifice in mind. This is indicated by the ancient Hebrew grammar: "The masculine gender could be translated 'whatever comes

out' or 'whoever comes out' and 'I will sacrifice it.' " (Wolf) i.

Commentator Adam Clarke agreed that according to the most accurate Hebrew

scholars, the best translation is *I will consecrate it to the LORD, or I will offer it for a burnt-offering*. As he wrote, "If it be a thing fit for a *burnt-offering*, it shall be made one; if fit for the *service of God*, it shall be consecrated to him."

ii. Human sacrifice was strictly forbidden by the Mosaic Law in passages such as Lev.

18:21 and Deu. 12:31. It is almost certain that Jephthah was familiar with such passages because when he negotiated with the Ammonites, has demonstrated that he knew God's Word.

3. (32-33) God grants Israel victory over the Ammonites.

So Jephthah advanced toward the people of Ammon to fight against them, and the LORD delivered them into his hands. And he defeated them from Aroer as far as Minnith; twenty cities; and to Abel Keramim, with a very great slaughter. Thus the people of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.

a. **And the LORD delivered them into his hands:** God won a great and important victory for Israel through Jephthah. He overcame bitterness and family rejection to meet a great need. Despite his difficult past, God still wonderfully used him.

4. (34-35) A difficult vow to fulfill.

When Jephthah came to his house at Mizpah, there was his daughter, coming out to meet him with timbrels and dancing; and she *was his* only child. Besides her he had neither son nor daughter. And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he tore his clothes, and said, "Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low! You are among those who trouble me! For I have given my word to the LORD, and I cannot go back on it."

a. **When he saw her, he tore his clothes:** Jephthah made his foolish vow sincerely, fully intending to keep it. Yet he had not seriously considered the consequences of the vow.

Therefore he was grieved when his daughter was first to greet him out of his house.

b. I have given my word to the LORD, and I cannot go back on it: Jephthah knew the importance of keeping our vows to God. He would keep an oath even when it was to his own hurt (Psa. 15:4)

i. Ecc. 5:1-2 and 5:4-6 speak of the danger of making foolish vows. This passage makes it clear that it is better to not make vows at all than to make foolish vows. This does not mean that vows are bad - they can be good.

It means we must take them seriously.

Christians need to take seriously the sin of broken vows, and when we see them we must either repent and keep them or repent

of your foolishness in ever making the vow, and seek His release from the vow.

5. (36-40) Jephthah fulfills his vow to God.

So she said to him, "My father, *if* you have given your word to the LORD, do to me according to what has gone out of your mouth, because the LORD has avenged you of your enemies, the people of Ammon." Then she said to her father, "Let this thing be done for me: let me alone for two months, that I may go and wander on the mountains and bewail my virginity, my friends and I." So he said, "Go." And he sent her away *for* two months; and she went with her friends, and bewailed her virginity on the mountains. And it was so at the end of two months that she returned to her father, and he carried out his vow with her which he had vowed. She knew no man.

And it became a custom in Israel *that* the daughters of Israel went four days each year to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite.

a. He carried out his vow with her which he had vowed: Some think that Jephthah did really offer his daughter as a burnt offering. If he did, this was clearly an

example of misguided zeal for God, because God never *asked* him to make such a foolish vow or to fulfill it so foolishly.

i. Later in their history, Israel began to serve a terrible pagan god named Molech, who was "worshipped" with child sacrifice in the most terrible way imaginable. God never asked to be served in this terrible way, and therefore it can't be blamed on God.

b. **She went with her friends, and bewailed her virginity . . . She knew no man:** These words indicate that it is more likely that Jephthah set his daughter aside for the

tabernacle service according to the principle of Lev. 27:2-4, where persons set apart to God in a vow are not required to be sacrificed (as animals were) but were "given" to the tabernacle in monetary value.

i. We know that there were women who were set apart for the tabernacle service; they were called *the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting* (Exo. 38:8; 1Sa. 2:22). It is likely that Jephthah's daughter became one of these women who served at the tabernacle.

ii. His daughter and friends rightly sorrow that she was given to the tabernacle service before she was ever married. Probably most the women who *assembled at the door of the tabernacle* were older widows.

iii. By sending his unmarried, only daughter to the service of the tabernacle for the rest of her life, it shows how seriously both Jephthah and his daughter took his promise to God.

iv. This seems like the best explanation because Jephthah is listed as a hero of the faith (Heb. 11:32). It is hard to think of him as doing something so contrary to God's ways as offering his daughter as a human sacrifice.

© 2003 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** Gilead's wife also gave him sons. When his wife's sons grew up, they made Jephthah leave and said to him, "You are not going to inherit any of our father's wealth, because you are another woman's son." **3** So Jephthah left his half-brothers and lived in the land of Tob. Lawless men joined Jephthah's gang and traveled with him.

4 It was some time after this when the Ammonites fought with Israel. **5** When the Ammonites attacked, the leaders of Gilead asked Jephthah to come back from the land of Tob. **6** They said, "Come, be our commander, so we can fight with the Ammonites." **7** Jephthah said to the leaders of Gilead, "But you hated me and made me leave my father's house. Why do you come to me now, when you are in trouble?" **8** The leaders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "That may be true, but now we pledge to you our loyalty. Come with us and fight with the Ammonites.

Then you will become the leader of all who live in Gilead."

9 Jephthah said to the leaders of Gilead, "All right! If you take me back to fight with the Ammonites and the LORD gives them to me, I will be your leader." **10** The leaders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "The LORD will judge any grievance you have against us, if we do not do as you say." **11** So Jephthah went with the leaders of Gilead. The people made him their leader and commander. Jephthah repeated the terms of the agreement before the LORD in Mizpah.

12 Jephthah sent messengers to the Ammonite king, saying, "Why have you come against me to attack my land?" **13** The Ammonite king said to Jephthah's messengers, "Because Israel stole my land when they came up from Egypt - from the Arnon River in the south to the Jabbok River in the north, and as far west as the Jordan. Now return it peaceably!"

14 Jephthah sent messengers back to the Ammonite king **15** and said to him, "This is what Jephthah says, 'Israel did

not steal the land of Moab and the land of the Ammonites. **16** When they left Egypt, Israel traveled through the desert as far as the Red Sea and then came to Kadesh. **17** Israel sent messengers to the king of Edom, saying, "Please allow us to pass through your land." But the king of Edom rejected the request. Israel sent the same request to the king of Moab, but he was unwilling to cooperate. So Israel stayed at Kadesh. **18** Then Israel went through the desert and bypassed the land of Edom and the land of Moab. They traveled east of the land of Moab and camped on the other side of the Arnon River; they did not go through Moabite territory (the Arnon was Moab's border). **19** Israel sent messengers to King Sihon, the Amorite king who ruled in Heshbon, and said to him, "Please allow us to pass through your land to our land." **20**

But Sihon did not trust Israel to pass through his territory. He assembled his whole army, camped in Jahaz, and fought with Israel. **21** The LORD God of Israel handed Sihon and his whole army over to Israel and they defeated them. Israel took all the land of the Amorites who lived in that land. **22** They took all the Amorite territory from the Arnon River on the south to the Jabbok River on the north, from the desert in the east to the Jordan in the west. **23**

Since the LORD God of Israel has driven out the Amorites before his people Israel, do you think you can just take it from them? **24** You have the right to take what Chemosh your god gives you, but we will take the land of all whom the LORD our God has driven out before us. **25** Are you really better than Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab? Did he dare to quarrel with Israel? Did he dare to fight with them? **26** Israel has been living in Heshbon and its nearby towns, in Aroer and its nearby towns, and in all the cities along the Arnon for three hundred years! Why did you not reclaim them during that time? **27** I have not done you wrong, but you are doing wrong by attacking me. May the LORD, the Judge, judge this day between the Israelites and the

Ammonites!” **28** But the Ammonite king disregarded the message sent by Jephthah.

29 The LORD’s spirit empowered Jephthah. He passed through Gilead and Manasseh and went to Mizpah in Gilead. From there he approached the Ammonites. **30**

Jephthah made a vow to the LORD, saying, “If you really do hand the Ammonites over to me, **31** then whoever is the first to come through the doors of my house to meet me when I return safely from fighting the Ammonites – he will belong to the LORD and I will offer him up as a burnt sacrifice.” **32** Jephthah approached the Ammonites to fight with them, and the LORD handed them over to him. **33** He defeated them from Aroer all the way to Minnith – twenty cities in all, even as far as Abel Keramim! He wiped them out! The Israelites humiliated the Ammonites.

34 When Jephthah came home to Mizpah, there was his daughter hurrying out to meet him, dancing to the rhythm of tambourines. She was his only child; except for her he had no son or daughter. **35** When he saw her, he ripped his clothes and said, “Oh no! My daughter! You have completely ruined me! You have brought me disaster! I made an oath to the LORD, and I cannot break it.” **36** She said to him, “My father, since you made an oath to the LORD, do to me as you promised. After all, the LORD

vindicated you before your enemies, the Ammonites.” **37**

She then said to her father, “Please grant me this one wish. For two months allow me to walk through the hills with my friends and mourn my virginity.” **38** He said, “You may go.” He permitted her to leave for two months. She went with her friends and mourned her virginity as she walked through the hills. **39** After two months she returned to her father, and he did to her as he had vowed.

She died a virgin. Her tragic death gave rise to a custom in Israel. **40** Every year Israelite women commemorate the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite for four days.

1 The Ephraimites assembled and crossed over to Zaphon. They said to Jephthah, “Why did you go and fight with the Ammonites without asking us to go with you? We will burn your house down right over you!”

Guzik - Judges 12:1-15

Judges 12 - Jephthah and the Ephraimites;

Three Minor Judges

A. Jephthah and the Ephraimites conflict.

1. (1) The men of the tribe of Ephraim are angry with Jephthah.

Then the men of Ephraim gathered together, crossed over toward Zaphon, and said to Jephthah, "Why did you cross over to fight against the people of Ammon, and did not call us to go with you? We will burn your house down on you with fire!"

a. **Why did you cross over to fight against the people of Ammon, and did not call us to go with you?** The tribe of Ephraim felt slighted by Jephthah, and were angry that they did not have a central and prestigious role in the victorious battle over the Ammonites.

i. There is a tendency within all of us to not want to do a job unless we receive credit. It is evident that the people of the tribe of Ephraim were more concerned with getting the credit than with seeing a job done. This seems to be a consistent problem with the people of the tribe of Ephraim; they gave a similar response to Gideon in 8:1.

ii. Being a real servant of Jesus Christ means that we serve without concern for credit, knowing that it is up to Jesus to give any reward.

b. **We will burn your house down on you with fire!** The people of Ephraim also backed up their anger with a threat. They threatened to burn down Jephthah's house with him in it.

2. (2-3) Jephthah responds to the people of the tribe of Ephraim.

And Jephthah said to them, "My people and I were in a great struggle with the people of

Ammon; and when I called you, you did not deliver me out of their hands. So when I saw that you would not deliver *me*, I took my life in my hands and crossed over against the people of Ammon; and the LORD delivered them into my hand. Why then have you come up to me this day to fight against me?"

a. **The LORD delivered them into my hand:** Jephthah's idea is clear. God won a great victory through him when the Ephraimites stood by, though they had the opportunity to help. In this he pointed out the essentially unjust character of their complaint.

b. **When I called you, you did not deliver me:** The people of Ephraim come off here as chronic complainers. When they had a chance to step out boldly for God they did not do it. Yet when the work was done and God was glorified, they complained that they didn't get to participate.

3. (4-6) The Gileadites (led by Jephthah)

overwhelm the people of the tribe of Ephraim.

Now Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead and fought against Ephraim. And the men of Gilead defeated Ephraim, because they said, "You Gileadites *are* fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites *and* among the Manassites." The Gileadites seized the fords of the Jordan before the Ephraimites *arrived*. And when *any* Ephraimite who escaped said, "Let me cross over," the men of Gilead would say to him, "*Are* you an Ephraimite?" If he said, "No," then they would say to him, "Then say, 'Shibboleth!'" And he would say, "Sibboleth," for he could not pronounce *it* right. Then they would take him and kill him at the fords of the Jordan. There fell at that time forty-two thousand Ephraimites.

a. **The men of Gilead defeated Ephraim:** Apparently the men of Ephraim were better at talking than fighting, because the men of Gilead seemed to conquer them easily.

b. **Then they would say to him, "Then say,**

'Shibboleth'! The word **shibboleth** means either "ear of grain" or "flowing stream." With this word the people from the tribe of Ephraim were easily identified by their dialect. They had a hard time pronouncing the "h" in **Shibboleth** and said *Sibboleth* instead, therefore giving themselves away.

i. During World War II, the German soldiers sometimes identified Russian Jews by the way they pronounced the word for corn: "kookoorooza." Their distinctive pronunciation revealed their ethnic background. So it was for these men of Ephraim.

ii. The term **shibboleth** therefore came into the English language as something which determines which side you are one. In

modern English usage a shibboleth is the same as an "acid test."

iii. Today, there are certain true shibboleths in a person's vocabulary. In Jdg. 12:6, you could know something about a person by how they said **Shibboleth**. Today when someone talks about Jesus, you can listen to what they say and learn something about them. You can listen as they speak about the Bible, and you know something about them. It is also true that as much as our dialect gives us away, so does our everyday speech. Others should be able to tell that we are Christians by the way we talk.

4. (7) The remainder of Jephthah's time as a judge.

And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then

Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried in among the cities of Gilead.

B. Three minor judges.

1. (8-10) The judge Ibzan.

After him, Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel. He had thirty sons. And he gave away thirty daughters in marriage, and brought in thirty daughters from elsewhere for his sons. He judged Israel seven years. Then Ibzan died and was buried at Bethlehem.

2. (11-12) The judge Elon.

After him, Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel. He judged Israel ten years. And Elon the Zebulunite died and was buried at Aijalon in the country of Zebulun.

3. (13-15) The judge Abdon.

After him, Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite judged Israel. He had forty sons and thirty grandsons, who rode on seventy young donkeys.

He judged Israel eight years. Then Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the mountains of the Amalekites.

© 2003 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** Jephthah said to them, "My people and I were entangled in controversy with the Ammonites. I asked for your help, but you did not deliver me from their power. **3** When I saw that you were not going to help, I risked my life and advanced against the Ammonites, and the LORD handed them over to me. Why have you come up to fight with me today?" **4** Jephthah assembled all the men of Gilead and they fought with Ephraim. The men of Gilead defeated Ephraim, because the Ephraimites insulted them, saying, "You Gileadites are refugees in Ephraim, living within Ephraim's and Manasseh's territory." **5** The Gileadites captured the fords of the Jordan River opposite Ephraim. Whenever an Ephraimite fugitive said, "Let me cross over," the men of Gilead asked him, "Are you an Ephraimite?" If he said, "No," **6** then they said to him, "Say 'Shibboleth!'" If he said, "Sibboleth" (and could not pronounce the word correctly), they grabbed him and executed him right there at the fords of the Jordan. On that day forty-two thousand Ephraimites fell dead. **7**

Jephthah led Israel for six years; then he died and was buried in his city in Gilead.

8 After him Ibzan of Bethlehem led Israel. **9** He had thirty sons. He arranged for thirty of his daughters to be married outside his extended family, and he arranged for thirty young women to be brought from outside as wives for his sons. Ibzan led Israel for seven years; **10** then he died and was buried in Bethlehem.

11 After him Elon the Zebulunite led Israel for ten years.

12 Then Elon the Zebulunite died and was buried in Aijalon in the land of Zebulun.

13 After him Abdon son of Hillel the Pirathonite led Israel.

14 He had forty sons and thirty grandsons who rode on seventy donkeys. He led Israel for eight years. **15**

Then Abdon son of Hillel the Pirathonite died and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekites.

1 The Israelites again did evil in the LORD's sight, so the LORD handed them over to the Philistines for forty years.

Guzik - Judges 13:1-25

Judges 13 - The Birth of Samson

A. The Angel of the LORD announces the birth of Samson to Manoah's wife.

1. (1) Life in Israel at the time of Samson's birth.

Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.

a. **Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD:** The cycle of sin, bondage, repentance, deliverance, blessing, and sin again continued in the history of Israel. Into these times was born the next judge of Israel, Samson. In this sense Samson was truly a man from his times. He was a study in contrasts, a man of great strengths and great weaknesses.

In this, he was a picture of Israel's history - of great highs and lows.

i. Samson is also an important example of unfulfilled potential. Though he did great things for God, it is staggering to consider what he *might* have done and been for God.

b. **And the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines:** Because of Israel's sin and rebellion, God again gained their attention by bring them into subjugation to the Philistines.

2. (2-3) The Angel of the LORD appears to Manoah's wife.

Now there was a certain man from Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name *was* Manoah; and his wife *was* barren and had no children. And the Angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son.

a. **A certain man from Zorah:** The town of **Zorah** is about 14 miles west of Jerusalem. It was in the land of the tribe of Dan.

b. **And the Angel of the LORD appeared:** From the rest of the chapter, we see that we should regard this Angel as no mere angel. As seen before in the Book of Judges (Jdg. 2:1-5

and 6:11-24), this is Jesus on a special mission, appearing as a man before His incarnation in Bethlehem.

c. **You are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son:** This promise came as a great blessing to this woman burdened by childlessness.

3. (4-5) Special instructions regarding the child to come.

"Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or *similar* drink, and not to eat anything unclean. For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines."

a. **He shall be a Nazirite to God:** Num. 6:1-21 describes the details of the vow of a Nazirite.

When under the vow, people regarded themselves as specially devoted to God, leaving their hair uncut, drinking no wine and eating no grape products, and avoiding any kind of contact with anything dead.

b. **From the womb:** There was nothing particularly unusual about someone taking the vow of a Nazirite for a specific period of time.

What was unusual in Samson's case was that he was to live under the vow from birth - this was a lifetime vow.

c. **Please be careful not to drink wine or similar drink, and not to eat anything unclean:** Manoah's wife also had to share in the Nazirite vow during the time she carried Samson.

4. (6-7) Manoah's wife reports the appearance of the Angel of the LORD to her husband.

So the woman came and told her husband, saying, "A Man of God came to me, and His countenance *was* like the countenance of the Angel of God, very awesome; but I did not ask Him where He *was* from, and He did not tell me His name. And He said to me, 'Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. Now drink no wine or *similar* drink, nor eat anything unclean, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.'"

B. The Angel of the LORD announces the birth of Samson to Manoah.

1. (8-14) The Angel of the LORD reconfirms the words spoken before.

Then Manoah prayed to the LORD, and said, "O my Lord, please let the Man of God whom You sent come to us again and teach us what we shall do for the child who will be born." And God listened to the voice of Manoah, and the Angel of God came to the woman again as she was sitting in the field; but Manoah her husband *was* not with her. Then the woman ran in haste and told her

husband, and said to him, "Look, the Man who came to me the *other* day has just now appeared to me!" So Manoah arose and followed his wife. When he came to the Man, he said to Him, "Are You the Man who spoke to this woman?" And He said, "I *am*." Manoah said, "Now let Your words come *to pass*! What will be the boy's rule of life, and his work?" So the Angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "Of all that I said to the woman let her be careful. She may not eat anything that comes from the vine, nor may she drink wine or *similar* drink, nor eat anything unclean. All that I commanded her let her observe."

a. Please let the Man of God whom You sent come to us again and teach us what

we shall do for the child who will be born: Manoah already knew what God wanted him to do because the Angel of the LORD already told him. Here he asks for confirmation of the word previously spoken.

b. What will be the boy's rule of life, and his work? God honored Manoah's request for confirmation. But He did not answer this request to know the future. He simply called Manoah and his wife to obey what God already told them to do.

2. (15-18) Manoah offers the Angel of the LORD a meal; the Angel of the LORD will only accept an offering.

Then Manoah said to the Angel of the LORD,

"Please let us detain You, and we will prepare a young goat for You." And the Angel of the LORD

said to Manoah, "Though you detain Me, I will not eat your food. But if you offer a burnt

offering, you must offer it to the LORD." (For Manoah did not know He *was* the Angel of the LORD.) Then Manoah said to the Angel of the LORD, "What *is* Your name, that when Your words come *to pass* we may honor You?" And the Angel of the LORD said to him, "Why do you ask My name, seeing it *is* wonderful?"

a. **I will not eat your food. But if you offer a burnt offering, you must offer it to the LORD:** Here, the Angel of the LORD shows Himself to be God, in the sense that He did not need a meal but will accept a sacrificial offering made unto the LORD.

b. **Why do you ask My name, seeing it is wonderful?** Here the Angel of the LORD shows Himself to be Jesus, in taking the name **wonderful** (Isa. 9:6).

3. (19-21) The Angel of the **LORD** displays His authority to Manoah and his wife.

So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it upon the rock to the LORD. And He did a wondrous thing while Manoah and his wife looked on; it happened as the flame went up toward heaven from the altar; the Angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar! When Manoah and his wife saw *this*, they fell on their faces to the ground. When the Angel of the LORD appeared no more to Manoah and his wife, then Manoah knew that He *was* the Angel of the LORD.

a. **He did a wondrous thing while Manoah and his wife looked on:** The Angel of the LORD proved He was *wonderful* by doing a **wondrous** thing - ascending in the flame of sacrifice to heaven.

b. **Then Manoah knew that He was the Angel of the LORD:** For the first time, Manoah and his wife understood that this Person was no mere man or messenger from God. They realized they spoke with God Himself.

4. (22-23) The reaction of Manoah and his wife.

And Manoah said to his wife, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God!" But his wife said to him, "If the LORD had desired to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, nor would He have shown us all these *things*, nor would He have told us *such things* as these at this time."

a. **We shall surely die, because we have**

seen God! Manoah perhaps knew what God said to Moses in Exo. 33:20: *You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.* Manoah feared that because they just saw the LORD, they would shortly die.

b. If the LORD had desired to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt offering: This is a perceptive response from Manoah's wife. She understood that God had not done so much for them to abandon them now. God's past work in our life is a promise of His future care and blessing for us.

i. Manoah's wife was an invaluable source of encouragement for his faith. She didn't criticize Manoah. She didn't say, "What a silly man you are. What a stupid man you must be to be so frightened." We can never strengthen someone's faith by criticizing. We must do as Manoah's wife did - encourage them and build faith up.

ii. An old preacher said that there is many a man who has had his head broken with his own rib. But there is many a man who has had his heart cured in the same way.

c. He would not have accepted a burnt offering: The basis of the faith of Manoah's wife was that she knew that the **LORD** had accepted their offering to Him. If the **LORD**

wanted to do you evil, He would have never accepted an offering on your behalf - the offering of Jesus on the cross.

5. (24-25) Samson born, and the Holy Spirit comes upon him.

So the woman bore a son and called his name Samson; and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him. And the Spirit of the LORD began to move upon him at Mahaneh Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

a. And the LORD blessed him . . . And the Spirit of the LORD began to move upon Him: This is the source of the great strength we see in Samson later. We usually think of Samson as a man with huge, rippling muscles; but others couldn't figure out why he was so strong. It is reasonable to think that he did not *look* very strong. It was the Spirit of God who made him strong.

© 2003 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** There was a man named Manoah from Zorah, from the Danite tribe. His wife was infertile and childless. **3** The LORD's angelic messenger appeared to the woman and said to her, "You are infertile and childless, but you will conceive and have a son. **4** Now be careful! Do not drink wine or beer, and do not eat any food that will make you ritually unclean. **5** Look, you will conceive and have a son.

You must never cut his hair, for the child will be dedicated to God from birth. He will begin to deliver Israel from the power of the Philistines."

6 The woman went and said to her husband, "A man sent from God came to me! He looked like God's angelic messenger – he was very awesome. I did not ask him where he came from, and he did not tell me his name. **7**

He said to me, 'Look, you will conceive and have a son. So now, do not drink wine or beer and do not eat any food that will make you ritually unclean. For the child will be dedicated to God from birth till the day he dies.'"

8 Manoah prayed to the LORD, "Please, Lord, allow the man sent from God to visit us again, so he can teach us how we should raise the child who will be born." **9** God answered Manoah's prayer. God's angelic messenger visited the woman again while she was sitting in the field.

But her husband Manoah was not with her. **10** The woman ran at once and told her husband, "Come quickly, the man who visited me the other day has appeared to me!" **11** So Manoah got up and followed his wife. When he met the man,

he said to him, "Are you the man who spoke to my wife?" He said, "Yes." **12** Manoah said, "Now, when your announcement comes true, how should the child be raised and what should he do?" **13** The LORD's messenger told Manoah, "Your wife should pay attention to everything I told her. **14** She should not drink anything that the grapevine produces. She must not drink wine or beer, and she must not eat any food that will make her ritually unclean. She should obey everything I commanded her to do." **15** Manoah said to the LORD's messenger, "Please stay here awhile, so we can prepare a young goat for you to eat." **16** The LORD's messenger said to Manoah, "If I stay, I will not eat your food. But if you want to make a burnt sacrifice to the LORD, you should offer it." (He said this because Manoah did not know that he was the LORD's messenger.) **17** Manoah said to the LORD's messenger, "Tell us your name, so we can honor you when your announcement comes true." **18** The LORD's messenger said to him, "You should not ask me my name, because you cannot comprehend it." **19** Manoah took a young goat and a grain offering and offered them on a rock to the LORD. The LORD's messenger did an amazing thing as Manoah and his wife watched. **20** As the flame went up from the altar toward the sky, the LORD's messenger went up in it while Manoah and his wife watched. They fell facedown to the ground.

21 The LORD's messenger did not appear again to Manoah and his wife. After all this happened Manoah realized that the visitor had been the LORD's messenger.

22 Manoah said to his wife, "We will certainly die, because we have seen a supernatural being!" **23** But his wife said to him, "If the LORD wanted to kill us, he would not have accepted the burnt offering and the grain offering from us. He would not have shown us all these things, or have spoken to us like this just now."

24 Manoah's wife gave birth to a son and named him Samson. The child grew and the LORD empowered him.

25 The LORD's spirit began to control him in Mahaneh Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

1 Samson went down to Timnah, where a Philistine girl caught his eye.

Guzik - Judges 14:1-20

Judges 14 - Samson's First Failed Marriage

A. Samson seeks a Philistine wife.

1. (1-3) Samson demands a Philistine wife.

Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines. So he went up and told his father and mother, saying, "I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife." Then his father and mother said to him, *"Is there* no woman among the daughters of your brethren, or among all my people, that you must go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?" And Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, for she pleases me well."

a. **Saw a woman in Timnah of the**

daughters of the Philistines: This seems to be a case of "love at first sight" for Samson. He saw this woman and he instantly wanted to marry her.

i. **She pleases me well** is literally, "she is right in my eyes." What Samson really cared about was how things *looked* to himself, not how they looked to the LORD.

i. "Love at first sight" is a powerful, but dangerous thing. It is entirely possible for us to fall in love with someone that we have no business falling in love with - which was exactly the case with Samson here. As well,

"love at first sight" feels wonderful, but doesn't last in its initial form forever. We can be attracted more to the feeling of love itself than the person we focus upon - whom we don't really know at first sight.

b. **Samson said to his father, "Ger her for me, for she pleases me well"** : In demanding a Philistine wife, Samson showed a sinful disregard for his parents and for God's will

(Deu. 7:3-4). Bound by romantic feelings, there are many people who still "demand" of God a mate out of God's will.

i. The command to the Israelis to not intermarry with the pagan nations around them applies to the Christian today in that a Christian must not marry someone who is not a Christian, joining themselves together with an unbeliever (2Co. 6:14).

ii. It isn't because those who are not Christians are not lovable - they are sometimes more lovable than believers. It is not because they aren't good enough, or worthy of our love. It is simply because to be a Christian means Jesus Christ is the most important thing in your life; and when a Christian and a non-Christian get together, you have two people who disagree on the most important things in life.

iii. By extension, a Christian really has no business *dating* a non-Christian. Those who do run a serious risk of falling in love with someone they have no business falling in love with. In fact, the whole philosophy of dating needs to be re-examined by Christians. It often teaches people more about how to break up and how to endure the pain of a broken heart than it teaches about building a lasting, enduring relationship.

iv. Additionally, a Christian is advised to carefully discern the Christian commitment of the one they are interested in. There have been many pretended conversions, calculated to merely entice a Christian to marriage.

v. If someone goes against God's plan and marries an unbeliever or if someone

becomes a Christian before their spouse, there are specific commands applying to their situation. The Apostle Paul clearly wrote that this one must do all that is possible to stay in the marriage, and be the best spouse they can be (1Co. 7:10-16).

vi. God did use Samson mightily; but God used Samson *despite* his sin, not because of it. It is fair to suppose that God may have used Samson in a far greater way if he made himself a clean vessel according to the principle of 2Ti. 2:20-21.

2. (4) God's will behind the scenes of Samson's desire to marry a Philistine woman.

But his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD; that He was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines. For at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.

a. **His father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD:** As the rest of the chapter shows, some good ultimately came out of this ungodly marriage. Many Philistines were killed and they were kept off balance in their attempts to dominate the Israelites.

i. However, *none* of that justified Samson's actions. Though God can make even the evil of man to serve His purposes, it never

justifies the evil that man does.

b. **He was seeking an occasion to move**

against the Philistines: In accomplishing this purpose, God did not *make* a reluctant Samson pursue the Philistine woman for marriage. God allowed Samson to do what he wanted to do, though the act itself was sinful. God allowed it for reasons in both Samson's life and for reasons on a larger scale.

i. Someone today might justify their desire to marry a non-Christian because they trust

some good will come out of it - such as their non-Christian partner eventually coming to Jesus. Things may work out that way, but even though God used Samson's marriage to a Philistine woman, it all came at a great personal cost to Samson.

ii. No matter how much good God can bring out of even the bad things we do, He can always bring far more good out of our obedience - and we ourselves experience much less pain.

3. (5-9) Samson slays a lion and eats some wild honey. So Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother, and came to the vineyards of Timnah. Now *to his* surprise, a young lion *came* roaring against him. And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though *he had* nothing in his hand. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done. Then he went down and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well. After some time, when he returned to get her, he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion. And behold, a swarm of bees and honey *were* in the carcass of the lion. He took some of it in his hands and went along, eating. When he came to his father and mother, he gave *some* to them, and they also ate. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion.

a. **He came to the vineyards of Timnah:** Samson was dedicated to God with a lifelong vow of a Nazirite (Jdg. 13:4-5). Nazirites were to have nothing to do with grape products in any form (Num. 6:3-4). Samson walked on dangerous ground here.

b. **He tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat:** Though

Samson flirted with compromise - both with his impending marriage and the **vineyards of Timnah** - he still had miraculous strength because **the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him**.

i. The Holy Spirit of God wants to come upon us and give us power but power for something far more important than ripping apart lions. The Holy Spirit comes upon us for the empowering to live for God as we should and for the power to tell others about Jesus effectively.

c. **She pleased Samson well:** This does not mean that she was a good woman for Samson to be attracted to or to marry. It is possible to fall in love with someone who is actually very wrong for us. This is why Pro. 4:23 says: *Keep (literally, guard or protect) your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.* If we don't guard our hearts, we can end up in trouble.

i. If we find that we are already in love with a wrong person, the only thing to do is to give them up, because it is right before God. Jesus told us that following Him would require that we give up the things we love most (Mar. 10:29-30).

d. **He took some of it in his hands and went along:** When Samson gathered honey from the dead carcass of a lion, he expressly violated his Nazirite vow, which stipulated that a Nazirite should never touch a dead body (Num. 6:6-7).

i. Significantly, Samson did this *after* he was remarkably filled with the Holy Spirit. This shows that an outpouring of the Holy Spirit does not automatically make you godlier. It gives you the *resources* to be godlier, but it doesn't "do it to you." A person can be wonderfully gifted by the Holy Spirit and yet very spiritually immature.

e. **He did not tell them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion:** Samson did not tell his parents where he got the honey because he knew it was a compromise of his Nazirite vow.

i. Samson had consecration (at least the appearance of it) without communion. This was only good for the sake of image. The empty nature of his consecration will eventually be evident.

B. The feast and the riddle.

1. (10-11) Samson hosts a "bachelor party" for Philistine friends.

So his father went down to the woman. And Samson gave a feast there, for young men used to do so. And it happened, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him.

a. **Samson gave a feast there:** Literally, this was a *drinking feast*. If Samson didn't break his Nazirite vow by partaking in the wine, he certainly put himself in a situation where it would be easy to do so.

2. (12-14) Samson poses a riddle concerning the lion and the honey.

Then Samson said to them, "Let me pose a riddle to you. If you can correctly solve and explain it to me within the seven days of the feast, then I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing. But if you cannot explain *it* to me, then you shall give me thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing." And they said to him, "Pose your riddle, that we may hear it." So he said to them: "Out of the eater came something to eat, and out of the strong came something sweet." Now for three days they could not explain the riddle.

a. **Changes of clothing:** This literally describes a fine suit of clothes you would wear to an important occasion. Therefore 30 fine suits were wagered. Like most betting, this

"friendly wager" would turn into something not quite friendly.

b. **Out of the eater came something to eat:** This was a clever riddle, and Samson shows that even if was weak morally he was not weak intellectually.

3. (15-18) Samson's Philistine wife extracts the answer to the riddle from Samson and tells it to the Philistines.

But it came to pass on the seventh day that they said to Samson's wife, "Entice your husband, that he may explain the riddle to us, or else we will burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you invited us in order to take what is ours? *Is that* not so? " Then Samson's wife wept on him, and said, "You only hate me! You do not love me!

You have posed a riddle to the sons of my people, but you have not explained *it* to me." And he said to her, "Look, I have not explained *it* to my father or my mother; so should I explain *it* to you?" Now she had wept on him the seven days while their feast lasted. And it happened on the seventh day that he told her, because she pressed him so much. Then she explained the riddle to the sons of her people. So the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down: "What *is* sweeter than honey? And what *is* stronger than a lion?" And he said to them: "If you had not plowed with my heifer, You would not have solved my riddle!"

a. **Then Samson's wife wept on him, and said, "You only hate me! You do not love me!**

Samson's Philistine wife knew how to manipulate the situation and how to make herself a burden to her husband until she got what she wanted from him.

i. Some wives will make themselves a burden to their husbands until they get what they want. This tactic is used because it often works in the short term. But it can poison the relationship and ends up costing more than it gains.

b. He told her, because she pressed him so much: A woman easily manipulated the world's strongest man. This weakness of Samson will later be the cause of his downfall.

i. The willingness of Samson's Philistine wife to side with her people against Samson

shows a fundamental weakness in their

marriage. She did not fulfill the idea

essential to marriage of leaving one's father and mother to be joined in a one flesh

relationship to their spouse (Gen. 2:24; Mat.

19:5). Yet this also shows why it was wrong

for Samson to marry a Philistine. We cannot

expect someone who does not love the God

of Israel to build a marriage on God's

principles.

ii. However, we see that the reason

Samson's wife cooperated against her

husband was also somewhat complicated.

She acted out of fear because of their threat (**else we will**

burn you and your father's house with fire). If she told

Samson about the threats, he could have more than

handled the situation. She apparently did not feel safe with

Samson, but he was her best

safety.

c. If you had not plowed with my heifer,

You would not have solved my riddle:

Samson's use of this proverb shows the anger and bitterness he felt at being manipulated.

Samson's wife "won" what she wanted through manipulation, but she lost her husband's heart.

i. When a man gives in to his wife's

manipulations so as to keep peace, it almost always builds anger and resentment in the

man - and guilt in the woman for what she

did. The way of manipulation is tempting

(because it works), but always brings real

destruction.

4. (19-20) Samson's anger and revenge.

Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of their men, took their apparel, and gave the changes *of clothing* to those who had explained the riddle. So his anger was aroused, and he went back up to his father's house. And Samson's wife was *given* to his companion, who had been his best man.

a. Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon

him mightily: The Spirit of the LORD did not come upon Samson to avenge the hurt feelings of a husband. God's strategy was larger: *He was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines* (Jdg. 14:4). Therefore He used this occasion to pour out His Spirit on Samson to fight against the Philistines.

b. Killed thirty of their men, took their apparel, and gave the changes of clothing to those who had explained the riddle: Samson paid off the bet, but he did it at the expense of the Philistines. He killed thirty of these enemies of Israel, and gave their garments to satisfy the debt.

c. Samson's wife was given to his

companion, who had been his best man: Samson won the battle, but lost the war. His wife left him and went to his best man. It is interesting to think what Samson and his wife might say if they went in for marriage counseling.

i. What Samson might say to a marriage

counselor: *I love my wife, but it seems that we are not moving in the same direction. All I hear is nag, nag, nag; I finally do what she nags me to do, but by then I'm angry and the situation is worse than ever. I need to feel that she supports me, and that she's on my side. I think she wants to give up on the marriage, if she hasn't already.*

ii. What Samson's wife might say to a

marriage counselor: *My husband is a good guy, but he does not meeting my needs. It was love at first sight for us, but now things have gone downhill. There are things I need him to do and to be that he just can't, or won't. He doesn't respond to my needs and then we just get into a big fight, and no one is happy. I wonder if he loves me anymore.*

iii. Samson was at fault for not guarding his heart against falling in love with a woman he had no business falling in love with. He was at fault for not founding the marriage on God's principles. He was also at fault for not responding to his wife's manipulations with love, free from anger.

iv. At the same time, Samson's wife was at fault for siding with others against her husband. She was at fault for not telling her husband what the real problem was. And she was at fault for manipulating her husband by being such a bother until she got her way. Most of all, she was at fault for *giving up on the marriage*. Samson didn't leave her; she left him. No matter what the problems in a relationship, what God commands us most of all is to not give up on the marriage.

© 2003 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** When he got home, he told his father and mother, "A Philistine girl in Timnah has caught my eye. Now get her for my wife." **3** But his father and mother said to him, "Certainly you can find a wife among your relatives or among all our people! You should not have to go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines." But Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, because she is the right one for me." **4** Now his father and mother did not realize this was the LORD's doing, because he was looking for an opportunity to stir up trouble with the Philistines (for at that time the Philistines were ruling Israel). **5** Samson went down to Timnah. When he approached the vineyards of Timnah, he saw a roaring young lion attacking him. **6**

The LORD's spirit empowered him and he tore the lion in two with his bare hands as easily as one would tear a young goat. But he did not tell his father or mother what he had done.

7 Samson continued on down to Timnah and spoke to the girl. In his opinion, she was just the right one. **8** Some time later, when he went back to marry her, he turned aside to see the lion's remains. He saw a swarm of bees in the lion's carcass, as well as some honey. **9** He scooped it up with his hands and ate it as he walked along. When he returned to his father and mother, he offered them some and they ate it. But he did not tell them he had scooped the honey out of the lion's carcass.

10 Then Samson's father accompanied him to Timnah for the marriage. Samson hosted a party there, for this was customary for bridegrooms to do. **11** When the Philistines saw he had no attendants, they gave him thirty groomsmen who kept him company. **12** Samson said to them, "I will give you a riddle. If you really can solve it during the seven days the party lasts, I will give you thirty linen robes and thirty sets of clothes. **13** But if you cannot solve it, you will give me thirty linen robes and thirty sets of clothes." They said to him, "Let us hear your riddle." **14**

He said to them,

"Out of the one who eats came something to eat; out of the strong one came something sweet."

They could not solve the riddle for three days.

15 On the fourth day they said to Samson's bride, "Trick your husband into giving the solution to the riddle. If you refuse, we will burn up you and your father's family. Did you invite us here to make us poor?" **16** So Samson's bride cried on his shoulder and said, "You must hate me; you do not love me! You told the young men a riddle, but you have not told me the solution." He said to her, "Look, I have not even told my father or mother. Do you really expect me to tell you?" **17** She cried on his shoulder until the party was

almost over. Finally, on the seventh day, he told her because she had nagged him so much. Then she told the young men the solution to the riddle. **18** On the seventh day, before the sun set, the men of the city said to him, "What is sweeter than honey?

What is stronger than a lion?"

He said to them,

"If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have solved my riddle!"

19 The LORD's spirit empowered him. He went down to Ashkelon and murdered thirty men. He took their clothes and gave them to the men who had solved the riddle. He was furious as he went back home. **20** Samson's bride was then given to his best man.

1 Sometime later, during the wheat harvest, Samson took a young goat as a gift and went to visit his bride. He said to her father, "I want to have sex with my bride in her bedroom!" But her father would not let him enter.

Guzik - Judges 15:1-20

Judges 15 - Samson Takes on the Philistines

A. Retaliation back and forth.

1. (1-3) Samson's rage at discovering that his wife is given to another.

After a while, in the time of wheat harvest, it happened that Samson visited his wife with a young goat. And he said, "Let me go in to my wife, into *her* room." But her father would not permit him to go in. Her father said, "I really thought that you thoroughly hated her; therefore I gave her to your companion. *Is* not her younger sister better than she? Please, take her instead."

And Samson said to them, "This time I shall be blameless regarding the Philistines if I harm them!"

a. **I really thought that you thoroughly**

hated her: It's hard to know why Samson's father-in-law thought that Samson hated his wife. Perhaps this was just an

excuse to explain why he did what he did; or perhaps Samson's

Philistine wife poisoned her father's opinion of Samson (Jdg. 14:16).

b. **Samson said to them:** Even though

Samson was angry with his wife's father, the real root of the problem was the bad choices Samson made in love. He had no business allowing himself to fall in love with an ungodly, pagan woman.

i. No wonder Pro. 4:23 tells us: *Keep*

(literally, *guard or protect*) *your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.* Failure to guard our heart can result in great trouble.

c. **This time I shall be blameless regarding the Philistines if I harm them!** God used Samson's ungodly anger for His purposes. As Psa. 76:10 says, *Surely the wrath of man shall praise You.* This doesn't justify Samson's anger, but it shows the glory and power of God to use all things to His purposes.

2. (4-5) Samson strikes out against the Philistines by burning their crops.

Then Samson went and caught three hundred foxes; and he took torches, turned *the foxes* tail to tail, and put a torch between each pair of tails.

When he had set the torches on fire, he let *the foxes* go into the standing grain of the Philistines, and burned up both the shocks and the standing grain, as well as the vineyards *and* olive groves.

a. **Samson went and caught three hundred**

foxes: Samson seems to act like a juvenile delinquent. Yet God used it all for His purpose of fighting against the Philistines.

b. **Put a torch between each pair of tails:** Some object that Samson could not have captured 300 foxes. Yet the word translated

foxes probably refers to a jackal, not a fox, and jackals are known to run in large packs, sometimes up to 200. Second, there is nothing that says Samson did this all by himself. Third, there is nothing that says he did it all in one day.

3. (6-7) The Philistines retaliate by killing Samson's wife and family.

Then the Philistines said, "Who has done this?"

And they answered, "Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he has taken his wife and given her to his companion." So the Philistines came up and burned her and her father with fire.

Samson said to them, "Since you would do a thing like this, I will surely take revenge on you, and after that I will cease."

a. **So the Philistines came up and burned**

her and her father with fire: God was used all this to advance His plan for Israel and redemption. Yet because of Samson's

disobedience, it all happened at great personal cost to Samson. It is fair to suppose that if Samson were obedient, God would have furthered His plan in a way that *blessed* Samson.

b. **I will surely take revenge on you, and after that I will cease:** We have here the bitter story of retaliation - of trying to avenge wrongs done to us. Retaliation is a never-ending story, and one that never wins in the end.

Those who trust in God must be able to say,

"Retaliation belongs to God. I'll let Him settle the score."

i. Much of the war, disaster, deep-seated

hatred, and pain in our world come from this instinct to retaliate. But Jesus told us to not retaliate an eye for an eye, but to take control of the situation by giving even more (Mat. 5:38-42). When we do this, we act like God, who did not retaliate against man for his sin and rebellion, but instead gave His

only Son to die for man.

4. (8) Samson repays the Philistines for the murder of his wife.

So he attacked them hip and thigh with a great slaughter; then he went down and dwelt in the cleft of the rock of Etam.

a. **Hip and thigh** is an expression for a cruel, unsparing slaughter. Samson was a one-man army against the Philistines.

b. **Dwelt in the cleft of the rock of Etam:** Samson has no more family and can trust virtually no one. He lives like a fugitive, alone in a cave.

B. Samson slays one thousand Philistines.

1. (9-13) Judah surrenders Samson to the Philistines.

Now the Philistines went up, encamped in Judah, and deployed themselves against Lehi. And the men of Judah said, "Why have you come up against us?" So they answered, "We have come up to arrest Samson, to do to him as he has done to us." Then three thousand men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam, and said to Samson, "Do you not know that the Philistines rule over us? What *is* this you have done to us?"

And he said to them, "As they did to me, so I have done to them." But they said to him, "We have come down to arrest you, that we may deliver you into the hand of the Philistines." Then Samson said to them, "Swear to me that you will not kill me yourselves." So they spoke to him, saying, "No, but we will tie you securely and deliver you into their hand; but we will surely not kill you." And they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock.

a. **We have come up to arrest Samson, to do to him as he has done to us:** The fact that soldiers from the tribe of Judah will give up Samson to the Philistines shows just how much they are under the oppression of the Philistines.

They would rather please their oppressors than support their deliverer.

b. Do you not know that the Philistines

rule over us? Samson didn't want to hear this or recognize it. As far as he was concerned, the Philistines *should not* rule over the people of God.

c. They bound him with two new ropes

and brought him up from the rock: It seems that Samson submitted to this. Assuming this is true, it shows great faith on Samson's part. He was willing to put himself in a difficult position and to trust God to take care of him.

2. (14-17) Samson uses the jawbone of a donkey to kill a thousand Philistines.

When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting against him. Then the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him; and the ropes that *were* on his arms became like flax that is burned with fire, and his bonds broke loose from his hands.

He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, reached out his hand and took it, and killed a thousand men with it. Then Samson said: "With the jawbone of a donkey, Heaps upon heaps, With the jawbone of a donkey I have slain a thousand men!" And so it was, when he had finished speaking, that he threw the jawbone from his hand, and called that place Ramath Lehi.

a. He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, reached out his hand and took it, and

killed a thousand men with it: Samson was unique among the judges because he was used as a "one-man army" against the Philistines.

Other Judges of Israel led armies to against their enemies, but Samson fought alone.

b. With the jawbone of a donkey, heaps

upon heaps: Samson's bold declaration of victory has a poetic touch that is difficult to render in translation. One

effort goes like this: "With the jawbone of an ass I have piled them in a mass!"

c. **And called that place Ramath Lehi:** This name essentially means "Jawbone Hill." It was an obviously appropriate name for this place of Samson's great victory.

i. One preacher came up with a five point sermon on the jawbone of an ass, likening it to the weapon of the gospel:

- *It was a novel weapon*
- *It was a most convenient weapon*
- *It was a simple weapon*
- *It was a ridiculous weapon*
- *It was a successful weapon*

3. (18-20) God provides for Samson miraculously.

Then he became very thirsty; so he cried out to the LORD and said, "You have given this great deliverance by the hand of Your servant; and now shall I die of thirst and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?" So God split the hollow place that *is* in Lehi, and water came out, and he drank; and his spirit returned, and he revived.

Therefore he called its name En Hakkore, which is in Lehi to this day. And he judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines.

a. **Then he became very thirsty:** Samson needed this thirst to remind himself of his own weakness and need right after such a great victory. After a great victory we need to remember our mortality.

i. Matthew Poole comments on Samson's great thirst: it was "partly sent by God, that by the experience of his own impotency he might be forced to ascribe the victory to God only, and not to himself."

b. **God split the hollow place that is in Lehi, and water came out, and he drank;**

and his spirit returned, and he revived: This is an example of the principle that God's work, done God's way,

will always be provided for by God. Here the LORD showed His faithfulness to Samson by supplying the needs of His servant.

© 2003 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** Her father said, "I really thought you absolutely despised her, so I gave her to your best man. Her younger sister is more attractive than she is. Take her instead!" **3**

Samson said to them, "This time I am justified in doing the Philistines harm!" **4** Samson went and captured three hundred jackals and got some torches. He tied the jackals in pairs by their tails and then tied a torch to each pair. **5**

He lit the torches and set the jackals loose in the Philistines' standing grain. He burned up the grain heaps and the standing grain, as well as the vineyards and olive groves. **6** The Philistines asked, "Who did this?" They were told, "Samson, the Timnite's son-in-law, because the Timnite took Samson's bride and gave her to his best man." So the Philistines went up and burned her and her father. **7** Samson said to them, "Because you did this, I will get revenge against you before I quit fighting." **8** He struck them down and defeated them. Then he went down and lived for a time in the cave in the cliff of Etam.

9 The Philistines went up and invaded Judah. They arrayed themselves for battle in Lehi. **10** The men of Judah said, "Why are you attacking us?" The Philistines said, "We have come up to take Samson prisoner so we can do to him what he has done to us." **11** Three thousand men of Judah went down to the cave in the cliff of Etam and said to Samson, "Do you not know that the Philistines rule over us? Why have you done this to us?" He said to them, "I have only done to them what they have done to me." **12** They said to him, "We have come down to take you prisoner so we can hand you over to the Philistines."

Samson said to them, "Promise me you will not kill me."

13 They said to him, "We promise! We will only take you prisoner and hand you over to them. We promise not to kill you." They tied him up with two brand new ropes and led him up from the cliff. **14** When he arrived in Lehi, the Philistines shouted as they approached him. But the LORD's spirit empowered him. The ropes around his arms were like flax dissolving in fire, and they melted away from his hands. **15** He happened to see a solid jawbone of a donkey. He grabbed it and struck down a thousand men.

16 Samson then said,
"With the jawbone of a donkey
I have left them in heaps;
with the jawbone of a donkey
I have struck down a thousand men!"

17 When he finished speaking, he threw the jawbone down and named that place Ramath Lehi.

18 He was very thirsty, so he cried out to the LORD and said, "You have given your servant this great victory. But now must I die of thirst and fall into hands of the Philistines?" **19** So God split open the basin at Lehi and water flowed out from it. When he took a drink, his strength was restored and he revived. For this reason he named the spring En Hakkore. It remains in Lehi to this very day. **20** Samson led Israel for twenty years during the days of Philistine prominence.

1 Samson went to Gaza. There he saw a prostitute and went in to have sex with her.

Guzik - Judges 16:1-31

Judges 16 - Samson's Disgrace and Death

A. Samson and Delilah.

1. (1-3) Samson and the harlot at Gaza.

Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her. *When* the Gazites *were told*, "Samson has come here!" they surrounded *the place* and lay in wait for him all night at the gate of the city. They were quiet all night, saying, "In the morning, when it is daylight, we will kill him." And Samson lay *low* till midnight; then he

arose at midnight, took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two gateposts, pulled them up, bar and all, put *them* on his shoulders, and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron.

a. **Saw a harlot there, and went in to her:** Samson is in obvious sin here. This is a clear example of how a man so used of God can also sin and sin blatantly.

i. Samson wanted to be used by God, but he also yielded to the deceitfulness of sin. He kept the external features of his Nazirite vow zealously, while at the same time sinning blatantly with a prostitute.

ii. Samson did what we nearly all do when deceived by sin. He put his life into categories, and figured that some categories God cared about, and some He did not.

Understanding that Jesus has claim over our entire life is a radical change of perspective.

b. **Put them on his shoulders, and carried them to the top of the hill:** Despite his sin, God still gave Samson supernatural strength to escape from the Philistines. God did this because God's purpose was bigger than Samson himself, and because God used Samson *despite* Samson's sin, not because of it.

2. (4-5) Delilah agrees to betray Samson.

Afterward it happened that he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name *was* Delilah.

And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, "Entice him, and find out where his great strength *lies*, and by what *means* we may overpower him, that we may bind him to afflict him; and every one of us will give you eleven hundred *pieces* of silver."

a. **He loved a woman . . . whose name was**

Delilah: Samson falls in love again, and falls after a woman completely wrong for him. This will be another example of the pain and ruin that came into Samson's life because he would not guard his heart.

b. Every one of us will give you eleven

hundred pieces of silver: Delilah was also deeply in love. But she was in love with money, not Samson. 1,100 shekels made up more than 140 pounds of silver.

3. (6-9) Samson lies to Delilah about the source of his strength.

So Delilah said to Samson, "Please tell me where your great strength *lies*, and with what you may be bound to afflict you." And Samson said to her, "If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, then I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man." So the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, and she bound him with them. Now *men were* lying in wait, staying with her in the room.

And she said to him, "The Philistines *are* upon you, Samson!" But he broke the bowstrings as a strand of yarn breaks when it touches fire. So the secret of his strength was not known.

4. (10-12) Samson lies to Delilah about the source of his strength a second time.

Then Delilah said to Samson, "Look, you have mocked me and told me lies. Now, please tell me what you may be bound with." So he said to her, "If they bind me securely with new ropes that have never been used, then I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man." Therefore Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them, and said to him, "The Philistines *are* upon you, Samson!" And *men were* lying in wait, staying in the room. But he broke them off his arms like a thread.

a. Now, please tell me what you may be

bound with: It would seem that romantic attraction made Samson loose all sense. There was no good or rational reason why Samson would continue this relationship with Delilah or entertain her prying into the secret of his strength. Samson is a good example of how an ungodly relationship can warp thinking.

b. **Delilah took new ropes and bound him:** Samson allowed this bondage because he refused to escape the situation. Many today are in similar places of sin, compromise, and bondage - and refuse to escape the situation.

5. (13-15) Samson lies to Delilah about the source of his strength for the third time.

Delilah said to Samson, "Until now you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me what you may be bound with." And he said to her, "If you weave the seven locks of my head into the web of the loom"; so she wove *it* tightly with the batten of the loom, and said to him, "The Philistines *are* upon you, Samson!" But he awoke from his sleep, and pulled out the batten and the web from the loom. Then she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart *is* not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and have not told me where your great strength *lies*."

a. **Tell me what you may be bound with:** Delilah obviously cared nothing for Samson. His continued commitment to her is a remarkable testimony to the power of blind, irresponsible love.

6. (16-19) Samson finally betrays the source of his strength. And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, *so* that his soul was vexed to death, that he told her all his heart, and said to her, "No razor has ever come upon my head, for I *have been* a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man." When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, "Come up once more, for he has told me all his heart." So the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hand. Then she lulled him to sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him.

a. When she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death, that he told her all his heart:

Earlier Samson gave into the nagging of his Philistine wife (Jdg. 14:15-18). Now he yields to the nagging of Delilah. She certainly sinned by using such terrible manipulation, but Samson also sinned by yielding to that manipulation.

i. Her previous complaint that Samson's love for her was empty was itself a hollow protest. Delilah had no love for him, and she expected Samson to destroy himself and his service for God to "prove" his love for her.

b. He told her all his heart: When Samson did this, it was a very sad scene. He had to know what was to come. He faced the choice between faithfulness to his God and continuing an ungodly relationship.

i. In this we see the strongest man in the world weak under the power of an ungodly relationship. Perhaps Samson figured that because he was strong in one area of his life, he was strong in all areas. In this he was desperately wrong.

c. Then she lulled him to sleep on her

knees: No doubt, Delilah used sweet words to lull Samson to sleep. Her pretended love for Samson for the sake of money is deeply troubling.

d. Then she began to torment him: This was fitting. We might say that Delilah began tormenting Samson long before this.

e. And his strength left him: There was nothing magical in Samson's hair. We might also say that Samson began breaking his Nazirite vow before this. Yet there came a time when

Samson finally had to reckon with his rejection of God's mercy.

B. Samson's arrest and death.

1. (20) Samson is seized by the Philistines.

And she said, "The Philistines *are* upon you, Samson!" So he awoke from his sleep, and said, "I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!" But he did not know that the LORD

had departed from him.

a. **I will go out as before:** Samson didn't know things were different. He lived in compromise for so long that he thought it would never make a difference.

i. Is a tragic example of wasted potential and rejection of God's warnings. Samson thought he could "get away" with sin. He misinterpreted the merciful delay of God's judgment or correction as a sign that He really didn't care. He therefore presumed on God's mercy and continued on in his sin, making things far worse.

b. **He did not know that the LORD had departed from him:** Samson's strength was not in his hair, it was in his relationship with God. He worked against that relationship to the point where God finally **departed from him**, in the sense that He no longer blessed Samson with supernatural strength.

2. (21-22) Samson's Philistine imprisonment.

Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza. They bound him with bronze fetters, and he became a grinder in the prison. However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaven.

a. **Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes:** It was fitting that Samson was first blinded in his imprisonment. He was attracted to ungodly relationships through his eyes. His failure to restrain this attraction to women brought him into bondage.

b. **They bound him with bronze fetters:** Samson didn't humble himself in obedience

before God - he insisted on the "freedom" of doing what he wanted to do. This left him with no freedom at all.

i. Sin has its wages, and this was Samson's payday. His sin left him blind, in bondage, and a slave. Before Samson's blindness, bondage, and slavery were only inward, but they eventually became evident outwardly.

c. The hair of his head began to grow

again: God gave Samson hope in the midst of a dungeon. His hair began to return and we can suppose that his heart also began to return.

3. (23-25) Samson is mocked by his enemies.

Now the lords of the Philistines gathered together to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god, and to rejoice. And they said: "Our god has delivered into our hands Samson our enemy!" When the people saw him, they praised their god; for they said: "Our god has delivered into our hands our enemy, the destroyer of our land, And the one who multiplied our dead." So it happened, when their hearts were merry, that they said, "Call for Samson, that he may perform for us." So they called for Samson from the prison, and he performed for them. And they stationed him between the pillars.

a. Our god has delivered into our hands

Samson our enemy! When Samson pursued his ungodly relationships he might have justified it to himself by thinking that the only harm was done to himself. Yet here we see that his disobedience led to giving glory to false gods. Samson became a trophy for worshippers of false gods.

b. When they people saw him, they

praised their god: The message preached by the followers of Dagon was clear. They said, "Our god is stronger than the God of Israel, because we have conquered Samson." Often the disobedience of God's leaders leads others to deny God.

3. (26-31) Samson's bittersweet death.

Then Samson said to the lad who held him by the hand, "Let me feel the pillars which support the temple, so that I can lean on them." Now the temple was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines *were* there; about three thousand men and women on the roof watching while Samson performed. Then Samson called to the LORD, saying, "O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O

God, that I may with one *blow* take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!" And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars which supported the temple, and he braced himself

against them, one on his right and the other on his left. Then Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" And he pushed with *all his* might, and the temple fell on the lords and all the people who *were* in it. So the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life. And his brothers and all his father's household came down and took him, and

brought *him* up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of his father Manoah. He had judged Israel twenty years.

a. Samson said to the lad who held him by the hand:

The Philistines continued their mocking of Samson. At this large demonstration, they used a boy to "guard" him.

i. This makes us think all the more that

Samson was not a muscle bound man who

was naturally strong. His strength was truly supernatural, not natural.

b. That I may with one blow take

vengeance on the Philistines: Samson's end was both bitter and sweet. God answered his last prayer, and he achieved his greatest victory against the Philistines at the cost of his own life.

i. In this Samson is a picture of the believer in disobedience. God used him, but he did

not benefit from it. His life ended in personal tragedy, shadowed by the waste of great potential.

c. **Let me die with the Philistines:** This was suicide, but differed from suicide in the strict sense in that his purpose really wasn't to kill himself, but to kill as many Philistines as he could. There is a sense in which Samson was like modern suicide-bombers.

i. Suicide is clearly sin, the sin of self-murder. Yet we are wrong if we regard it as the unforgivable sin. Most all who commit suicide have given in to the lies and deceptions of Satan, whose purpose is to kill and destroy (Joh. 10:10).

d. **And he pushed with all his might, and the temple fell on the lords and all the people who were in it:** This could only happen with God supernaturally empowering Samson. This shows that God never forsook Samson, even when he was disobedient. God's mercies were there for Samson even in a Philistine prison. All Samson had to do was turn his heart back towards God and receive them.

i. We could say that Samson was restored with self-renunciation. This last great victory came only as he was broken, humiliated, and blind. He could no longer look to himself. Prior to this we don't see Samson as a man of prayer, but here he prayed. He was humbled enough to allow a little boy to help him.

ii. In summary, Samson shows the danger of underestimating our own sinfulness. He probably figured he had things under control with his own fleshly lusts, but his desire for love, romance, and sex led directly to his destruction. Samson was the great

conqueror who never allowed God to properly conquer him.

iii. Samson *had* to be deceived to keep going back to tempting and dangerous places. It seemed that just about every time he went

to the land of the Philistines, he fell into moral compromise. He should have learned

from this. Instead of putting himself in tempting situations, he should have fled from youthful lusts (2Ti. 2:22) like Joseph

did (Gen. 39:12). "Rather than break his relationship with Delilah, he allowed it to break him." (Wolf)

iv. Samson also shows the danger of being a loner as a leader. Everything Samson did he did alone. He judged for 20 years and never sought or used help from others.

v. Most of all, Samson is a powerful picture of wasted potential. He could have been and should have been one of the greatest men of God in the Old Testament; but he wasted his potential.

© 2003 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** The Gazites were told, "Samson has come here!" So they surrounded the town and hid all night at the city gate, waiting for him to leave. They relaxed all night, thinking, "He will not leave until morning comes; then we will kill him!" **3** Samson spent half the night with the prostitute; then he got up in the middle of the night and left. He grabbed the doors of the city gate, as well as the two posts, and pulled them right off, bar and all. He put them on his shoulders and carried them up to the top of a hill east of Hebron.

4 After this Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah, who lived in the Sorek Valley. **5** The rulers of the Philistines went up to visit her and said to her, "Trick him!"

Find out what makes him so strong and how we can subdue him and humiliate him. Each one of us will give you eleven hundred silver pieces."

6 So Delilah said to Samson, "Tell me what makes you so strong and how you can be subdued and humiliated." **7**

Samson said to her, "If they tie me up with seven fresh bowstrings that have not been dried, I will become weak and be just like any other man." **8** So the rulers of the Philistines brought her seven fresh bowstrings which had not been dried and they tied him up with them. **9** They hid in the bedroom and then she said to him, "The Philistines are here, Samson!" He snapped the bowstrings as easily as a thread of yarn snaps when it is put close to fire. The secret of his strength was not discovered.

10 Delilah said to Samson, "Look, you deceived me and told me lies! Now tell me how you can be subdued." **11** He said to her, "If they tie me tightly with brand new ropes that have never been used, I will become weak and be just like any other man." **12** So Delilah took new ropes and tied him with them and said to him, "The Philistines are here, Samson!" (The Philistines were hiding in the bedroom.) But he tore the ropes from his arms as if they were a piece of thread.

13 Delilah said to Samson, "Up to now you have deceived me and told me lies. Tell me how you can be subdued." He said to her, "If you weave the seven braids of my hair into the fabric on the loom and secure it with the pin, I will become weak and be like any other man."

14 So she made him go to sleep, wove the seven braids of his hair into the fabric on the loom, fastened it with the pin, and said to him, "The Philistines are here, Samson!"

He woke up and tore away the pin of the loom and the fabric.

15 She said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when you will not share your secret with me? Three times you have deceived me and have not told me what makes you so strong." **16** She nagged him every day and pressured

him until he was sick to death of it. **17** Finally he told her his secret. He said to her, "My hair has never been cut, for I have been dedicated to God from the time I was conceived. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me; I would become weak, and be just like all other men." **18** When Delilah saw that he had told her his secret, she sent for the rulers of the Philistines, saying, "Come up here again, for he has told me his secret." So the rulers of the Philistines went up to visit her, bringing the silver in their hands. **19** She made him go to sleep on her lap and then called a man in to shave off the seven braids of his hair. She made him vulnerable and his strength left him.

20 She said, "The Philistines are here, Samson!" He woke up and thought, "I will do as I did before and shake myself free." But he did not realize that the LORD had left him. **21**

The Philistines captured him and gouged out his eyes.

They brought him down to Gaza and bound him in bronze chains. He became a grinder in the prison. **22** His hair began to grow back after it had been shaved off.

23 The rulers of the Philistines gathered to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to celebrate. They said, "Our god has handed Samson, our enemy, over to us." **24**

When the people saw him, they praised their god, saying, "Our god has handed our enemy over to us, the one who ruined our land and killed so many of us!"

25 When they really started celebrating, they said, "Call for Samson so he can entertain us!" So they summoned Samson from the prison and he entertained them. They made him stand between two pillars. **26** Samson said to the young man who held his hand, "Position me so I can touch the pillars that support the temple. Then I can lean on them." **27** Now the temple was filled with men and women, and all the rulers of the Philistines were there.

There were three thousand men and women on the roof watching Samson entertain. **28** Samson called to the LORD, "O Master, LORD, remember me! Strengthen me just one

more time, O God, so I can get swift revenge against the Philistines for my two eyes!" **29** Samson took hold of the two middle pillars that supported the temple and he leaned against them, with his right hand on one and his left hand on the other. **30** Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" He pushed hard and the temple collapsed on the rulers and all the people in it. He killed many more people in his death than he had killed during his life. **31** His brothers and all his family went down and brought him back. They buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father. He had led Israel for twenty years.

1 There was a man named Micah from the Ephraimite hill country.

Guzik - Judges 17:1-13

Judges 17 - Micah's Idolatry

A. Micah makes a shrine for idols.

1. (1-2) He returns a large amount of stolen silver to his mother.

Now there was a man from the mountains of Ephraim, whose name *was* Micah. And he said to his mother, "The eleven hundred *shekels* of silver that were taken from you, and on which you put a curse, even saying it in my ears; here *is* the silver with me; I took it." And his mother said, "*May you be* blessed by the LORD, my son!"

a. **Now there was a man:** Chapters 17 and 18

of Judges present to us a "case study" of the spiritual confusion and sin in Israel during the days of the Judges. These two chapters show us just how bad things were.

b. **Whose name was Micah:** Micah, from the tribe of Ephraim, stole 1,100 shekels of silver from his mother and then returned them. His mother **blessed** her son for being a thief and then changing his mind.

i. This account reveals a lot about the character of Micah, his mother, and the general spiritual state of Israel during this period.

ii. Jdg. 17:10 indicates that ten shekels a

year was an adequate wage. Therefore,
1,100 shekels was a great fortune.

2. (3-4) Micah's mother directs that some of the money be used to make an image to be used in worship.

So when he had returned the eleven hundred *shekels* of silver to his mother, his mother said, "I had wholly dedicated the silver from my hand to the LORD for my son, to make a carved image and a molded image; now therefore, I will return it to you." Thus he returned the silver to his mother. Then his mother took two hundred *shekels* of silver and gave them to the silversmith, and he made it into a carved image and a molded image; and they were in the house of Micah.

a. To make a carved image and a molded

image: Some believe this was an image of a false god (such as Baal or Ashtoreth). Others believe that it was an image representing Yahweh. Either way, God strictly forbade this.

i. The gold calf that Aaron made was actually meant to represent Yahweh (Exo. 32:4-5). But this violated the second commandment: *You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God* (Exo. 20:4-5).

b. He made it into a carved image and a

molded image: By his fallen nature, man wants to make God into *his* image. Many religious people "carve" their own concept of God and assume that this is the God of the Bible. It takes effort to understand and accept the God of the Bible.

i. The sense of this passage is that Micah did all this easily. It wasn't hard to have an idol made in Israel at that time. This shows how Israel's society was bent towards idolatry.

3. (5) Micah establishes an elaborate worship.

The man Micah had a shrine, and made an ephod and household idols; and he consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest.

a. **Micah had a shrine:** Micah first sets up a **shrine** - sort of a small temple, a place where others came to worship these idols.

b. **And made an ephod:** Micah imitated the worship at the true Tabernacle of God by making an **ephod**. This was a specific garment worn by priests of Israel.

c. **And household idols:** In addition to this first idol, Micah also made **household idols** -

literally, *tereophim* - gods that were worshipped in hopes of gaining prosperity and guidance.

d. **He consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest:** Finally, Micah established a priesthood among his sons. In each of these, Micah did everything he could to set up a rival religion in Israel.

i. All of this came from Micah and not from God. This was a completely man-originated and man-centered religion. Therefore the purpose of the shrine, the beautiful ephod, the attractive idols, and the established priesthood was to serve and please man, not God. This pattern of man-pleasing religion is common with many religions and churches today.

4. (6) A summarization of the spiritual state of Israel during the time of the Judges.

In those days *there was* no king in Israel; everyone did *what was* right in his own eyes.

a. **There was no king in Israel:** There was, in fact, a king in Israel - Israel should have recognized God as King. But since Israel rejected God as King, they were without any good and effective leadership.

b. **Everyone did what was right in his own eyes:** Modern culture regards this as the ideal state of society. But the Bible and common sense tell us that this kind of moral, spiritual, and social anarchy brings nothing but destruction.

i. *There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death* (Pro. 14:12).

When man follows his own instincts, his own inclinations, it leads to ruin. We need to follow God's way, not our own.

B. Micah hires an unscrupulous Levite.

1. (7-8) An opportunistic Levite looking for a "position."

Now there was a young man from Bethlehem in Judah, of the family of Judah; he *was* a Levite, and was staying there. The man departed from the city of Bethlehem in Judah to stay wherever he could find *a place*. Then he came to the mountains of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, as he journeyed.

a. **There was a young man from**

Bethlehem: This man, as a **Levite**, had cities to live in and a place established by God for him to minister. Instead, he wanted to do what was right in his own eyes and went about offering himself as a "priest for hire," **wherever he could find a place**.

2. (9-11) Micah hires the Levite.

And Micah said to him, "Where do you come from?" So he said to him, "I *am* a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, and I am on my way to find *a place* to stay." Micah said to him, "Dwell with me, and be a father and a priest to me, and I will give you ten *shekels* of silver per year, a suit of clothes, and your sustenance." So the Levite went in. Then the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man became like one of his sons to him.

a. **Dwell with me, and be a father and a**

priest to me: Micah wanted this Levite to stay with him and work as a priest for him. He did this because he wanted to legitimize his personal shrine by having an officially recognized priest serving there. Deep down he knew that his idolatry was false and meaningless and he hoped that this would make it legitimate.

b. I will give you ten shekels of silver per year, a suit of clothes, and your sustenance: So, for **ten shekels** and a **suit of clothes**, the Levite hired himself out to the idolatry of Micah. The Levite was a perfect example of a hireling, someone who served God (or an idol) for what it could give him, instead of serving to glorify the LORD.

i. There are many different ways that hirelings get what they want. The monetary hireling is obvious, but there are also emotional hirelings who get into the ministry because of their insecurities and their need for approval.

c. Then the Levite was content to dwell with Micah: The arrangements seemed perfect to everyone and Micah felt he had gained a son.

3. (12-13) A false consecration and a false confidence.

So Micah consecrated the Levite, and the young man became his priest, and lived in the house of Micah. Then Micah said, "Now I know that the LORD will be good to me, since I have a Levite as priest!"

a. So Micah consecrated the Levite: Micah's consecration meant nothing at all. He had no authority from God to declare a renegade Levite as set apart by God to the service of this idolatrous shrine.

i. In this tragic account, each person is guilty of terrible sin. But we could say that the Levite was more guilty than Micah was. We can say this because the Levite was at least *supposed* to know the Word of God.

b. Now I know that the LORD will be good to me, since I have a Levite as priest!

Micah's confidence was just as false as his consecration. They were both based on superstition, not on God's Word.

i. We can say Micah was utterly sincere - but totally wrong. Sincerity is nice, but gets you nowhere if it is not coupled with truth. A person who sincerely thinks they can swim across the Pacific Ocean will drown just as surely as the person who isn't as sincere.

© 2003 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** He said to his mother, "You know the eleven hundred pieces of silver which were stolen from you, about which I heard you pronounce a curse? Look here, I have the silver.

I stole it, but now I am giving it back to you." His mother said, "May the LORD reward you, my son!" **3** When he gave back to his mother the eleven hundred pieces of silver, his mother said, "I solemnly dedicate this silver to the LORD. It will be for my son's benefit. We will use it to make a carved image and a metal image." **4** When he gave the silver back to his mother, she took two hundred pieces of silver to a silversmith, who made them into a carved image and a metal image. She then put them in Micah's house. **5** Now this man Micah owned a shrine. He made an ephod and some personal idols and hired one of his sons to serve as a priest. **6** In those days Israel had no king. Each man did what he considered to be right.

7 There was a young man from Bethlehem in Judah. He was a Levite who had been temporarily residing among the tribe of Judah. **8** This man left the town of Bethlehem in Judah to find another place to live. He came to the Ephraimite hill country and made his way to Micah's house. **9** Micah said to him, "Where do you come from?"

He replied, "I am a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah. I am looking for a new place to live." **10** Micah said to him, "Stay

with me. Become my adviser and priest. I will give you ten pieces of silver per year, plus clothes and food.”

11 So the Levite agreed to stay with the man; the young man was like a son to Micah. **12** Micah paid the Levite; the young man became his priest and lived in Micah’s house.

13 Micah said, “Now I know God will make me rich, because I have this Levite as my priest.”

1 In those days Israel had no king. And in those days the Danite tribe was looking for a place to settle, because at that time they did not yet have a place to call their own among the tribes of Israel.

Guzik - Judges 18:1-31

Judges 18 - Micah's Idolatry and the Migration

of the Tribe of Dan

A. Dan spies out Laish.

1. (1-2) The tribe of Dan sends spies to look for land to take among the people of Israel.

In those days *there was* no king in Israel. And in those days the tribe of the Danites was seeking an inheritance for itself to dwell in; for until that day *their* inheritance among the tribes of Israel had not fallen to them. So the children of Dan sent five men of their family from their territory, men of valor from Zorah and Eshtaol, to spy out the land and search it. They said to them, "Go, search the land." So they went to the mountains of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, and lodged there.

a. **For until that day their inheritance among the tribes of Israel had not fallen to them:** The tribe of Dan had land apportioned to them, but they found their own land too hard to conquer.

b. **So they went to the mountains of Ephraim:** Looking for easier land to conquer and make their own, the Danites came to the land of the tribe of Ephraim and the house of Micah.

2. (3-6) The Danites meet with Micah's Levite.

While they *were* at the house of Micah, they recognized the voice of the young Levite. They turned aside and said to him, "Who brought you here? What are you doing in this *place*? What do you have here?" He said to them, "Thus and so Micah did for me. He has hired me, and I have become his priest." So they said to him, "Please inquire of God, that we may know whether the journey on which we go will be prosperous." And the priest said to them, "Go in peace. The presence of the LORD *be* with you on your way."

a. **The recognized the voice of the young**

Levite: It may be that the spies from the tribe of Dan knew the renegade Levite personally. It is also possible that they simply recognized his accent as being from the southern part of Judea.

b. Please inquire of God, that we may know whether the journey on which we

go will be prosperous: This shows what a spiritually confused time this was in Israel.

Danites on a sinful mission met with a sinful Levite, and wanted to know from a righteous

God if their mission would be successful. Then the sinful Levite sent the sinning men on their way with God's blessing.

3. (7-10) The Danites choose a city for expansion: Laish.

So the five men departed and went to Laish.

They saw the people who *were* there, how they dwelt safely, in the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and secure. *There were* no rulers in the land who might put *them* to shame for anything.

They *were* far from the Sidonians, and they had no ties with anyone. Then *the spies* came back to their brethren at Zorah and Eshtaol, and their brethren said to them, "What *is* your report?" So they said, "Arise, let us go up against them. For we have seen the land, and indeed it *is* very good. *Would you do* nothing? Do not hesitate to go, *and* enter to possess the land. When you go, you will come to a secure people and a large land. For God has given it into your hands, a place where *there is* no lack of anything that *is* on the earth."

a. They dwelt safely, in the manner of the Sidonians:

The Danites found a city nearby that was not occupied by Israelites, but by a colony of the **Sidonians**. This was a group that God told Israel to drive out of the land of Canaan (Jos. 13:4).

b. For we have seen the land, and indeed it is very good: Seeing that the land was good and the city was not

heavily defended, the

Danites believed this would be a good city to conquer and take as their own territory.

4. (11-13) They assemble an army of 600 to take possession of Laish.

And six hundred men of the family of the Danites went from there, from Zorah and Eshtaol, armed with weapons of war.

Then they went up and

encamped in Kirjath Jearim in Judah. (Therefore they call that place Mahaneh Dan to this day.

There *it is*, west of Kirjath Jearim.) And they passed from there to the mountains of Ephraim, and came to the house of Micah.

a. **Six hundred men . . . armed with**

weapons of war: Curiously, they assembled an army of 600 men to fight for the city of Laish in the land of the tribe of Ephraim. Yet they could not fight for the land of their own tribal allotment. For some reason, to them and often to us, a distant battle seemed easier.

B. The tribe of Dan adopts Micah's idolatry.

1. (14-18a) On their way to Laish, the army of 600

men come to take Micah's shrine for themselves.

Then the five men who had gone to spy out the country of Laish answered and said to their

brethren, "Do you know that there are in these houses an ephod, household idols, a carved

image, and a molded image? Now therefore,

consider what you should do." So they turned aside there,

and came to the house of the young Levite man; to the

house of Micah; and greeted him. The six hundred men armed with their

weapons of war, who *were* of the children of Dan, stood by the entrance of the gate. Then the five men who had gone to

spy out the land went up. Entering there, they took the

carved image, the ephod, the household idols, and the

molded image. The priest stood at the entrance of the gate

with the six hundred men *who were* armed with weapons of war. When these went into Micah's house and took the carved image, the ephod, the household idols, and the molded image,

a. **Entering there, they took the carved image, the ephod, the household idols,**

and the molded image: This was a strange combination of low morality and strong religious feeling. It was as if someone really wanted to study the Bible - therefore they stole several Bibles.

b. **Took the carved image, the ephod, the household idols, and the molded image:** During the Los Angeles riots in the 1990's, a reporter came across three looters leaving a store. He asked them what they took, and the first two told him off with profanity. But the third man said, "I got some gospel music. I love Jesus!"

2. (18b-21) The Levite goes with the army from the tribe of Dan.

The priest said to them, "What are you doing?"

And they said to him, "Be quiet, put your hand over your mouth, and come with us; be a father and a priest to us. *Is it* better for you to be a priest to the household of one man, or that you be a priest to a tribe and a family in Israel?" So the priest's heart was glad; and he took the ephod, the household idols, and the carved

image, and took his place among the people.

Then they turned and departed, and put the little ones, the livestock, and the goods in front of them.

a. **Put your hand over your mouth:** This was a threat. They commanded the Levite to "shut up" or be attacked.

b. **So the priest's heart was glad:** His **heart was glad** because he was filled with mercenary ambition. The Levite did not care about Micah, only for the pay and status that he might get by being the priest for a whole tribe instead of a mere family.

3. (22-24) Micah's foolish idolatry comes to nothing.

When they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men who *were* in the houses near Micah's house gathered together and overtook the children of Dan. And they called out to the children of Dan. So they turned around and said to Micah, "What ails you, that you have gathered such a company?" So he said, "You have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and you have gone away. Now what more do I have?"

How can you say to me, 'What ails you?'"

a. **You have taken away my gods which I**

made: This is powerful irony. Micah had to rescue his own gods. Obviously, his gods should be able to care for themselves. We wonder if Micah saw the foolishness of this.

i. We each either worship a god of our own making or we worship the true God who made us. But the gods we make are always less than we are. Idol worship is just another way of worshipping self.

b. **Now what more do I have?** This shows how empty Micah's idolatry was. His false gods didn't bring him any lasting good.

4. (25-26) The army of the tribe of Dan refuses to give Micah his god back, so Micah goes home empty handed.

And the children of Dan said to him, "Do not let your voice be heard among us, lest angry men fall upon you, and you lose your life, with the lives of your household!" Then the children of Dan went their way. And when Micah saw that they *were* too strong for him, he turned and went back to his house.

a. **Lest angry men fall upon you, and you**

lose your life: This event and these words illustrate the general lawlessness in Israel during this long period of the Judges. The

children of Dan stole Michah's idol simply under the principle of "might makes right."

5. (27-29) The army from the tribe of Dan conquers the city of Laish and rename it Dan.

So they took *the things* Micah had made, and the priest who had belonged to him, and went to

Laish, to a people quiet and secure; and they struck them with the edge of the sword and

burned the city with fire. *There was* no deliverer, because it *was* far from Sidon, and they had no ties with anyone. It was in the valley that belongs to Beth Rehob. So they rebuilt the city and dwelt there. And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born to Israel. However, the name of the city formerly *was* Laish.

a. And they called the name of the city

Dan: The city of **Dan** will become the most prominent northern city in Israel. The phrase

"from Dan to Beersheba" (Jdg. 20:1, 1Sa. 3:20) will become an expression meaning, "from the north to the south of Israel" indicating all of Israel.

6. (30-31) The tribe of Dan officially adopts the idolatry that began with Micah.

Then the children of Dan set up for themselves the carved image; and Jonathan the son of

Gershom, the son of Manasseh, and his sons

were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land. So they set up for themselves Micah's carved image which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.

a. The children of Dan set up for

themselves the carved image: This was the beginning of *established* idolatry in Israel in the Promised Land. There was *individual* idolatry in Israel long before this, but this is *official* idolatry.

i. Through a strange chain of events, this began with a son stealing 1,100 shekels

from his mother (Jdg. 17:1-2). It ended with an entire tribe of Israel led into established idolatry.

b. So they set up for themselves Micah's

carved image: We can suppose that Micah had no idea how far-reaching the effects of his sin would become. His personal idolatry became the idolatry of an entire tribe, setting up a rival center of worship to **the house of God . . . in Shiloh.**

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2 The Danites sent out from their whole tribe five representatives, capable men from Zorah and Eshtaol, to spy out the land and explore it. They said to them, “Go, explore the land.” They came to the Ephraimite hill country and spent the night at Micah’s house. **3** As they approached Micah’s house, they recognized the accent of the young Levite. So they stopped there and said to him,

“Who brought you here? What are you doing in this place?

What is your business here?” **4** He told them what Micah had done for him, saying, “He hired me and I became his priest.” **5** They said to him, “Seek a divine oracle for us, so we can know if we will be successful on our mission.” **6**

The priest said to them, “Go with confidence. The LORD will be with you on your mission.”

7 So the five men journeyed on and arrived in Laish.

They noticed that the people there were living securely, like the Sidonians do, undisturbed and unsuspecting. No conqueror was troubling them in any way. They lived far from the Sidonians and had no dealings with anyone. **8**

When the Danites returned to their tribe in Zorah and Eshtaol, their kinsmen asked them, “How did it go?” **9**

They said, “Come on, let’s attack them, for we saw their land and it is very good. You seem lethargic, but don’t hesitate to invade and conquer the land. **10** When you invade, you will encounter unsuspecting people. The land is wide! God is

handing it over to you – a place that lacks nothing on earth!”

11 So six hundred Danites, fully armed, set out from Zorah and Eshtaol. **12** They went up and camped in Kiriath Jearim in Judah. (To this day that place is called Camp of Dan. It is west of Kiriath Jearim.) **13** From there they traveled through the Ephraimite hill country and arrived at Micah’s house. **14** The five men who had gone to spy out the land of Laish said to their kinsmen, “Do you realize that inside these houses are an ephod, some personal idols, a carved image, and a metal image? Decide now what you want to do.” **15** They stopped there, went inside the young Levite’s house (which belonged to Micah), and asked him how he was doing. **16** Meanwhile the six hundred Danites, fully armed, stood at the entrance to the gate. **17** The five men who had gone to spy out the land broke in and stole the carved image, the ephod, the personal idols, and the metal image, while the priest was standing at the entrance to the gate with the six hundred fully armed men. **18** When these men broke into Micah’s house and stole the carved image, the ephod, the personal idols, and the metal image, the priest said to them, “What are you doing?” **19** They said to him, “Shut up! Put your hand over your mouth and come with us! You can be our adviser and priest. Wouldn’t it be better to be a priest for a whole Israelite tribe than for just one man’s family?” **20**

The priest was happy. He took the ephod, the personal idols, and the carved image and joined the group.

21 They turned and went on their way, but they walked behind the children, the cattle, and their possessions. **22**

After they had gone a good distance from Micah’s house, Micah’s neighbors gathered together and caught up with the Danites. **23** When they called out to the Danites, the Danites turned around and said to Micah, “Why have you gathered together?” **24** He said, “You stole my gods that I made, as well as this priest, and then went away. What do I have left? How can you have the audacity to say to me,

‘What do you want?’” **25** The Danites said to him, “Don’t say another word to us, or some very angry men will attack you, and you and your family will die.” **26** The Danites went on their way; when Micah realized they were too strong to resist, he turned around and went home.

27 Now the Danites took what Micah had made, as well as his priest, and came to Laish, where the people were undisturbed and unsuspecting. They struck them down with the sword and burned the city. **28** No one came to the rescue because the city was far from Sidon and they had no dealings with anyone. The city was in a valley near Beth Rehob. The Danites rebuilt the city and occupied it.

29 They named it Dan after their ancestor, who was one of Israel’s sons. But the city’s name used to be Laish. **30**

The Danites worshiped the carved image. Jonathan, descendant of Gershom, son of Moses, and his descendants served as priests for the tribe of Dan until the time of the exile. **31** They worshiped Micah’s carved image the whole time God’s authorized shrine was in Shiloh.

1 In those days Israel had no king. There was a Levite living temporarily in the remote region of the Ephraimite hill country. He acquired a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah.

Guzik - Judges 19:1-30

Judges 19 - Gibeah's Crime

A. The Levite and his concubine.

1. (1) A Levite takes a concubine.

And it came to pass in those days, when *there was* no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite staying in the remote mountains of

Ephraim. He took for himself a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah.

a. **There was no king in Israel:** This sets the stage for the terrible story in the following chapters. This meant more than Israel not

having a political monarch; it meant that they refused to recognize God's leadership over

them.

b. **He took for himself a concubine:** The Levite's **concubine** was recognized as his legal partner, but she did not have the same status in the home or in society as a wife had.

i. In this sense a concubine was a legal mistress. Many prominent men in the Old Testament had concubines. Examples include Abraham (Gen. 25:6), Jacob (Gen. 35:22), Caleb (1Ch. 2:46), Saul (2Sa. 3:7), David (2Sa. 5:13), Solomon (1Ki. 11:3 - 300 concubines), and Rehoboam (2Ch. 11:21). Significantly, we *never* see this kind of family life blessed by God.

ii. The New Testament makes it clear that from the beginning God's plan was one man and one woman to be one flesh forever (Mat. 19:4-6), and each man is to be a "one-woman man" (1Ti. 3:2).

2. (2-4) The Levite reconciles with his concubine after she commits adultery.

But his concubine played the harlot against him, and went away from him to her father's house at Bethlehem in Judah, and was there four whole months. Then her husband arose and went after her, to speak kindly to her *and* bring her back, having his servant and a couple of donkeys with him. So she brought him into her father's house; and when the father of the young woman saw

him, he was glad to meet him. Now his father-in-law, the young woman's father, detained him; and he stayed with him three days. So they ate and drank and lodged there.

a. **Went after her, to speak kindly to her and bring her back:** Here the Levite is an example of how an offended spouse should act when there is adultery. Though she broke the bond between them, he worked hard to bring the relationship back together and succeeded.

i. Jesus told us that divorce is never commanded when there is adultery (Mat. 19:8). If a partner in marriage is sinned against, they can still work to make the marriage survive and succeed.

b. When the father of the young woman

saw him, he was glad to meet him: Perhaps the father was glad to see the Levite and his daughter back together or perhaps the father was simply glad to have his daughter out of his house again.

3. (5-10) The father of the concubine extends the visit with a traditionally generous show of hospitality.

Then it came to pass on the fourth day that they arose early in the morning, and he stood to depart; but the young woman's father said to his son-in-law, "Refresh your heart with a morsel of bread, and afterward go your way." So they sat down, and the two of them ate and drank

together. Then the young woman's father said to the man, "Please be content to stay all night, and let your heart be merry." And when the man stood to depart, his father-in-law urged him; so he lodged there again. Then he arose early in the morning on the fifth day to depart, but the young woman's father said, "Please refresh your heart."

So they delayed until afternoon; and both of them ate. And when the man stood to depart; he and his concubine and his servant; his father-in-law, the young woman's father, said to him,

"Look, the day is now drawing toward evening; please spend the night. See, the day is coming to an end; lodge here, that your heart may be

merry. Tomorrow go your way early, so that you may get home." However, the man was not willing to spend that night; so he rose and

departed, and came to opposite Jebus (that *is*, Jerusalem). With him were the two saddled donkeys; his concubine *was* also with him.

4. (11-15) Returning home, the Levite and the concubine decide to spend the night in Gibeah.

They *were* near Jebus, and the day was far spent; and the servant said to his master, "Come, please, and let us turn aside into this city of the Jebusites and lodge in it." But his master said to him, "We will not turn aside here into a city of foreigners, who *are* not of the children of Israel; we will go on to Gibeah." So he said to his servant, "Come, let us draw near to one of these places, and spend the night in Gibeah or in

Ramah." And they passed by and went their way; and the sun went down on them near Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin. They turned aside there to go in to lodge in Gibeah. And when he went in, he sat down in the open square of the city, for no one would take them into *his* house to spend the night.

a. **We will not turn aside here into a city of foreigners:** The Levite and his concubine considered a pagan town too dangerous. They therefore went on to **Gibeah**, a city of Israel, because they thought they would be safer there.

b. **No one would take them into his house to spend the night:** The Levite and his concubine found no hospitality in Gibeah. This reflects poorly on the people of Gibeah, because God commanded such hospitality among the

people of God (Lev. 19:33-34, Lev. 25:35, Mat. 25:35, Heb. 13:2). There is something wrong

when there is no such hospitality among God's people.

4. (16-21) Finally, a fellow Ephraimite finds them and takes them in.

Just then an old man came in from his work in the field at evening, who also *was* from the mountains of Ephraim; he was staying in Gibeah, whereas the men of the place *were* Benjamites.

And when he raised his eyes, he saw the traveler in the open square of the city; and the old man said, "Where are you going, and where do you come from?" So he said to him, "We *are* passing from Bethlehem in Judah toward the remote mountains of Ephraim; I *am* from there. I went to Bethlehem in Judah; *now* I am going to the house of the LORD. But there *is* no one who will take me into his house, although we have both straw and fodder for our donkeys, and bread and wine for myself, for your female servant, and for the young man *who is* with your servant; *there is* no lack of anything." And the old man said,

"Peace *be* with you! However, *let* all your needs *be* my responsibility; only do not spend the night in the open square." So he brought him into his house, and gave fodder to the donkeys. And they washed their feet, and ate and drank.

a. Who also was from the mountains of

Ephraim: The only person to extend hospitality to the Levite and his concubine was a man from their own region. None of the native people of Gibeah cared for the strangers in their midst.

B. The crime of Gibeah.

1. (22) Their perverted demand.

As they were enjoying themselves, suddenly certain men of the city, perverted men, surrounded the house *and* beat on the door.

They spoke to the master of the house, the old man, saying, "Bring out the man who came to your house, that we may know him *carnally*!"

a. Surrounded the house and beat on the

door: The verb form of the term **beat on the door** indicates that there was an increasingly loud pounding on

the door. This was in no way a polite or casual request.

b. Bring out the man who came to your house, that we may know him carnally!

Their request was the same made by the homosexuals who surrounded the house of Lot in Sodom (Gen. 19:5). The picture is clear:

During the time of the Judges, Israel was as bad as Sodom and Gomorrah.

2. (23-26) The wickedness and perversion of the men of Gibeah.

But the man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them, "No, my brethren! I beg you, do not act so wickedly! Seeing this man has come into my house, do not commit this

outrage. Look, *here is* my virgin daughter and *the man's* concubine; let me bring them out now.

Humble them, and do with them as you please; but to this man do not do such a vile thing!" But the men would not heed him. So the man took

his concubine and brought *her* out to them. And they knew her and abused her all night until morning; and when the day began to break, they let her go. Then the woman came as the day was dawning, and fell down at the door of the man's house where her master *was*, till it was light.

a. The man took his concubine and

brought her out to them: Though the perverted men of Gibeah are clearly guilty, so are the Levite and the host of the home. They clearly should have been willing to sacrifice themselves before their daughters and companions.

b. And they new her and abused her: When describing the full meaning of the original

Hebrew, Adam Clarke, due to modesty, did not translate the meaning into English. He left it in Latin so only the learned could understand the full implications of the wickedness and perversion of the men of Gibeah.

i. "One can easily see why the concubine had left her husband in the first place. She was virtually sacrificed to save his skin as the men sexually abused her all night." (Wolf)

ii. Clarke on Gibeah's sinful men: "Rascals and miscreants of the deepest dye; worse than brutes, being a compound of beast and devil inseparably blended."

iii. Centuries later, Israel still remembered this crime at Gibeah, and used it as an example of wickedness. *They are deeply corrupted, as in the days of Gibeah* (Mic.

9:9) *O Israel, you have sinned from the days of Gibeah* (Mic. 10:9).

3. (27-30) The Levite discovers his dead concubine and issues a call for national judgment.

When her master arose in the morning, and opened the doors of the house and went out to go his way, there was his concubine, fallen *at* the door of the house with her hands on the

threshold. And he said to her, "Get up and let us be going." But there was no answer. So the man lifted her onto the donkey; and the man got up and went to his place. When he entered his

house he took a knife, laid hold of his concubine, and divided her into twelve pieces, limb by limb, and sent her throughout all the territory of Israel.

And so it was that all who saw it said, "No such deed has been done or seen from the day that the children of Israel came up from the land of Egypt until this day. Consider it, confer, and speak up!"

a. **Get up and let us be going:** This is a painfully clear demonstration of the heartlessness of the Levite towards his concubine.

b. Divided her into twelve pieces, limb by limb, and sent her throughout all the

territory of Israel: This was an obviously grotesque way to deliver a message, but the method worked. It was tragic that the Levite did not show this kind of concern for righteousness earlier.

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2 However, she got angry at him and went home to her father's house in Bethlehem in Judah. When she had been there four months, **3** her husband came after her, hoping he could convince her to return. He brought with him his servant and a pair of donkeys. When she brought him into her father's house and the girl's father saw him, he greeted him warmly. **4** His father-in-law, the girl's father, persuaded him to stay with him for three days, and they ate and drank together, and spent the night there. **5** On the fourth day they woke up early and the Levite got ready to leave. But the girl's father said to his son-in-law, "Have a bite to eat for some energy, then you can go." **6** So the two of them sat down and had a meal together. Then the girl's father said to the man, "Why not stay another night and have a good time!" **7** When the man got ready to leave, his father-in-law convinced him to stay another night. **8** He woke up early in the morning on the fifth day so he could leave, but the girl's father said, "Get some energy. Wait until later in the day to leave!" So they ate a meal together. **9** When the man got ready to leave with his concubine and his servant, his father-in-law, the girl's father, said to him, "Look! The day is almost over! Stay another night! Since the day is over, stay another night here and have a good time. You can get up early tomorrow and start your trip home." **10** But the man did not want to stay another night. He left and traveled as far as Jebus (that is, Jerusalem). He had with him a pair of saddled donkeys and his concubine.

11 When they got near Jebus, it was getting quite late and the servant said to his master, "Come on, let's stop at this Jebusite city and spend the night in it." **12** But his master said to him, "We should not stop at a foreign city where non-Israelites live. We will travel on to Gibeah." **13**

He said to his servant, "Come on, we will go into one of the other towns and spend the night in Gibeah or Ramah."

14 So they traveled on, and the sun went down when they were near Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin. **15** They stopped there and decided to spend the night in Gibeah.

They came into the city and sat down in the town square, but no one invited them to spend the night.

16 But then an old man passed by, returning at the end of the day from his work in the field. The man was from the Ephraimite hill country; he was living temporarily in Gibeah. (The residents of the town were Benjaminites.) **17**

When he looked up and saw the traveler in the town square, the old man said, "Where are you heading? Where do you come from?" **18** The Levite said to him, "We are traveling from Bethlehem in Judah to the remote region of the Ephraimite hill country. That's where I'm from. I had business in Bethlehem in Judah, but now I'm heading home. But no one has invited me into their home. **19** We have enough straw and grain for our donkeys, and there is enough food and wine for me, your female servant, and the young man who is with your servants. We lack nothing." **20** The old man said, "Everything is just fine! I will take care of all your needs. But don't spend the night in the town square." **21** So he brought him to his house and fed the donkeys. They washed their feet and had a meal.

22 They were having a good time, when suddenly some men of the city, some good-for-nothings, surrounded the house and kept beating on the door. They said to the old man who owned the house, "Send out the man who came to visit you so we can have sex with him." **23** The man who owned the house went outside and said to them, "No, my brothers!

Don't do this wicked thing! After all, this man is a guest in my house. Don't do such a disgraceful thing!

24 Here are my virgin daughter and my guest's concubine. I will send them out and you can abuse them and do to them whatever you like. But don't do such a disgraceful thing to this man!" **25** The men refused to listen to him, so the Levite grabbed his concubine and made her go outside. They raped her and abused her all night long until morning. They let her go at dawn. **26** The woman arrived back at daybreak and was sprawled out on the doorstep of the house where her master was staying until it became light. **27** When her master got up in the morning, opened the doors of the house, and went outside to start on his journey, there was the woman, his concubine, sprawled out on the doorstep of the house with her hands on the threshold. **28** He said to her, "Get up, let's leave!" But there was no response. He put her on the donkey and went home. **29** When he got home, he took a knife, grabbed his concubine, and carved her up into twelve pieces. Then he sent the pieces throughout Israel. **30**

Everyone who saw the sight said, "Nothing like this has happened or been witnessed during the entire time since the Israelites left the land of Egypt! Take careful note of it! Discuss it and speak!"

1 All the Israelites from Dan to Beer Sheba and from the land of Gilead left their homes and assembled together before the LORD at Mizpah.

Guzik - Judges 20:1-48

Judges 20 - Israel's War With Benjamin and

Gibeah

A. The nation gathers to judge Gibeah.

1. (1-2) The nation gathers at the Levite's request.

So all the children of Israel came out, from Dan to Beersheba, as well as from the land of Gilead, and the congregation gathered together as one man before the LORD at Mizpah. And the leaders of all the people, all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand foot soldiers who drew the sword.

a. **So all the children of Israel came out:** It was a positive sign to see Israel gather for such a reason. This showed that they were willing to deal with the problem of sin in their midst.

i. It seems that the crime of Gibeah shocked the conscience of Israel. Today it seems that the crime at Gibeah would be material for tabloid news, Court TV, daytime talk shows, and talk radio - more than a national call to righteousness and repentance.

b. **The leaders of all the people, all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves:** Deu. 13:12-18 instructed Israel how to deal with such abominations among them. It said they must first test the truth of the accusations. If the charges were true, they must then utterly destroy those who committed such an abomination.

2. (3-7) The Levite describes the abuse and murder of his concubine.

(Now the children of Benjamin heard that the children of Israel had gone up to Mizpah.) Then the children of Israel said, "Tell *us*, how did this wicked deed happen?" So the Levite, the husband of the woman who was murdered, answered and said, "My concubine and I went into Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin, to spend the night. And the men

of Gibeah rose against me, and surrounded the house at night because of me. They intended to kill me, but instead they ravished my concubine so that she died. So I took hold of my concubine, cut her in pieces, and sent her throughout all the territory of the inheritance of Israel, because they committed lewdness and outrage in Israel. Look! All of you *are* children of Israel; give your advice and counsel here and now!"

a. They intended to kill me, but instead

ravished my concubine: The Levite spins the story to his own advantage. What he says is true, but he *doesn't* mention the cruel and callous way he abandoned his concubine to the mob.

3. (8-11) Preparations for war made.

So all the people arose as one man, saying,

"None *of us* will go to his tent, nor will any turn back to his house; but now this *is* the thing which we will do to Gibeah: *We will go up* against it by lot. We will take ten men out of *every* hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, a hundred out of *every* thousand, and a thousand out of *every* ten thousand, to make provisions for the people, that when they come to Gibeah in Benjamin, they may repay all the vileness that they have done in Israel." So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, united together as one man.

a. They may repay all the vileness that

they have done in Israel: This was extreme, but a valid and proper fulfillment of God's command to Israel Deu. 13:12-18.

4. (12-17) Benjamin's help sought and not given.

Then the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, "What *is* this wickedness that has occurred among you? Now therefore, deliver up the men, the perverted men who *are* in Gibeah, that we may put them to death and remove the evil from Israel!" But the children of Benjamin would not listen to the voice of their brethren, the children of Israel. Instead, the children of Benjamin gathered

together from their cities to Gibeah, to go to battle against the children of Israel. And from their cities at that time the children of Benjamin numbered twenty-six thousand men who drew the sword, besides the inhabitants of Gibeah, who numbered seven hundred select men. Among all this people *were* seven hundred select men *who were* left-handed; every one could sling a stone at a hair's *breadth* and not miss. Now besides Benjamin, the men of Israel numbered four hundred thousand men who drew the sword; all of these *were* men of war.

a. **But the children of Benjamin would not listen to the voice of their brethren:** The other tribes of Israel did the right thing in asking the tribe of Benjamin to **deliver up the men** who committed this crime. They sought to justly resolve the crisis without full war. But the tribe of Benjamin committed a great sin by putting their loyalty to the tribe before

obedience to God's Law.

i. Modern followers of God can make the same mistake today when they put the interests of their own nation before the interests of the Kingdom of God. It is important for Christians to remember that they are citizens of the Kingdom of God first (Phi. 3:20).

b. **Seven hundred select men who were left-handed; every one could sling a stone at a hair's breadth and not miss:** The tribe of Benjamin not only failed to support the just cause of the other tribes, the actively resisted the other tribes with an assembled army. The army included this division of **seven hundred select men**.

i. **And not miss:** The Hebrew word translated **miss** is literally *sin*. This illustrates the principle that the word "sin"

literally means to "miss the mark" - whether you are off by an inch or a yard.

c. Besides Benjamin, the men of Israel numbered four hundred thousand men:

The tribes of Israel prepared for a small civil war against the tribe of Benjamin. Israel was right in believing that the greatest good was not unity. Unity apart from justice and truth is unity not worth having.

B. The battle against Benjamin and Gibeah.

1. (18-21) The first day of battle - Israel is defeated before Benjamin.

Then the children of Israel arose and went up to the house of God to inquire of God. They said, "Which of us shall go up first to battle against the children of Benjamin?" The LORD said, "Judah first!" So the children of Israel rose in the morning and encamped against Gibeah. And the men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin, and the men of Israel put themselves in battle array to fight against them at Gibeah.

Then the children of Benjamin came out of Gibeah, and on that day cut down to the ground twenty-two thousand men of the Israelites.

a. **Went up to the house of God to inquire of God:** In the first battle, Israel sought the LORD - yet they were defeated. We can speculate that though they inquired of God,

they still trusted in the might of their army and in the goodness of their cause, but not in the LORD.

2. (22-23) Israel seeks God after the first defeat.

And the people, that is, the men of Israel, encouraged themselves and again formed the battle line at the place where they had put themselves in array on the first day. Then the children of Israel went up and wept before the LORD until evening, and asked counsel of the LORD, saying, "Shall I again draw near for battle against the children of my brother Benjamin?"

And the LORD said, "Go up against him."

a. **Then the children of Israel went up and wept before the LORD until evening:** To their credit, the children of Israel did not stop seeking the LORD after the first disaster in battle. They properly humbled themselves before God and sought Him regarding the next battle.

3. (24-25) On the second day of battle Israel is defeated before Benjamin again.

So the children of Israel approached the children of Benjamin on the second day. And Benjamin went out against them from Gibeah on the second day, and cut down to the ground eighteen thousand more of the children of Israel; all these drew the sword.

a. **Cut down to the ground eighteen thousand more of the children of Israel:** The loss on the second day of battle was worse than the loss on the first day of battle. This shows that even though the tribes of Israel sought the LORD and fought in a just cause, it was still a very difficult struggle. There was a great cost for them to pay in doing what was right.

4. (26-28) Israel repents before God after the second defeat. Then all the children of Israel, that is, all the people, went up and came to the house of God and wept. They sat there before the LORD and fasted that day until evening; and they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. So the children of Israel inquired of the LORD (the ark of the covenant of God *was* there in those days, and Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days), saying, "Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of my brother Benjamin, or shall I cease?" And the LORD said, "Go up, for tomorrow I will deliver them into your hand."

a. **They sat there before the LORD and fasted that day until evening:** God allowed the two days of defeat for the purpose of bringing Israel low. They needed to be

humbled, and these days of defeat compelled them to humble themselves.

i. God used this to humble the whole nation.

They had to understand that the horror of the crime at Gibeah was not merely the result of the sin of one group of men, or one city, or even one tribe. The whole nation had to be humbled because they first thought that the sin problem was only in Benjamin.

Israel had to see that that nation as a whole had a sin problem.

ii. After the first failure, Israel was sorry and wept. But it was only after the second failure that they put their repentance into action by fasting and made a sacrifice for sins. Sorrow and weeping are not enough if they are not matched by real repentance and taking care of the sin problem through sacrifice - the sacrifice of the cross.

iii. Part of their demonstration of humility was in *fasting*. In 1827, Adam Clarke wrote about fasting: "At present it is but little used; a strong proof that *self-denial* is wearing out of fashion." Clarke thought this was true of his day; he would probably think it all the more true of modern times.

b. **Go up, for tomorrow I will deliver them into your hand:** God didn't want the two days of humbling to make Israel think that they could never win. They were encouraged to go out **tomorrow** and trust God's promise.

5. (29-48) Third day of battle - victory for Israel over Benjamin and Gibeah.

Then Israel set men in ambush all around Gibeah. And the children of Israel went up against the children of Benjamin on the third day, and put themselves in battle array against Gibeah as at the other times. So the children of Benjamin went out against the people, *and* were drawn away from the city. They began to strike down *and* kill some of the people, as at the other times, in the highways (one of which goes up to Bethel and

the other to Gibeah) and in the field, about thirty men of Israel. And the children of Benjamin said, "They *are* defeated before us, as at first."

But the children of Israel said, "Let us flee and draw them away from the city to the highways."

So all the men of Israel rose from their place and put themselves in battle array at Baal Tamar.

Then Israel's men in ambush burst forth from their position in the plain of Geba. And ten thousand select men from all Israel came against Gibeah, and the battle was fierce. But *the Benjamites* did not know that disaster *was* upon them. The LORD defeated Benjamin before Israel. And the children of Israel destroyed that day twenty-five thousand one hundred Benjamites; all these drew the sword. So the children of Benjamin saw that they were defeated. The men of Israel had given ground to the Benjamites, because they relied on the men in ambush whom they had set against Gibeah.

And the men in ambush quickly rushed upon Gibeah; the men in ambush spread out and struck the whole city with the edge of the sword.

Now the appointed signal between the men of Israel and the men in ambush was that they would make a great cloud of smoke rise up from the city, whereupon the men of Israel would turn in battle. Now Benjamin had begun to strike *and* kill about thirty of the men of Israel. For they said, "Surely they are defeated before us, as *in* the first battle." But when the cloud began to rise from the city in a column of smoke, the Benjamites looked behind them, and there was the whole city going up *in smoke* to heaven. And when the men of Israel turned back, the men of Benjamin panicked, for they saw that disaster had come upon them. Therefore they turned *their backs* before the men of Israel in the direction of the wilderness; but the battle overtook them, and whoever *came* out of the cities they destroyed in their midst. They surrounded the

Benjamites, chased them, *and* easily trampled them down as far as the front of Gibeah toward the east. And eighteen thousand men of Benjamin fell; all these *were* men of valor. Then they turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon; and they cut down five thousand of them on the highways. Then they pursued them relentlessly up to Gidom, and killed two thousand of them. So all who fell of Benjamin that day were twenty-five thousand men who drew the sword; all these *were* men of valor. But six hundred men turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon, and they stayed at the rock of Rimmon for four months.

And the men of Israel turned back against the children of Benjamin, and struck them down with the edge of the sword; from *every* city, men and beasts, all who were found. They also set fire to all the cities they came to.

a. Let us flee and draw them away from

the city to the highways: The strategy used by the tribes of Israel against Gibeah was remarkably similar to the strategy used at Ai (Joshua 8). Perhaps they got this strategy by reading the writings of Joshua and Moses - that they returned to God's word in the course of their repentance.

b. Six hundred men turned and fled

toward the wilderness: The two days of defeat made the tribes of Israel ruthless towards the tribe of Benjamin, and they killed thousands of men of Benjamin. As a result of the battle, there remained only a 600-man remnant from the tribe of Benjamin.

c. The men of Israel turned back against

the children of Benjamin, and struck them down with the edge of the sword; from every city, men and beasts, all who were

found: The tribe of Benjamin was undeniably guilty, but there was no need for the complete slaughter as described here. This too-severe judgment against the tribe of Benjamin would be regretted by Israel.

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2 The leaders of all the people from all the tribes of Israel took their places in the assembly of God's people, which numbered four hundred thousand sword-wielding foot soldiers. **3** The Benjaminites heard that the Israelites had gone up to Mizpah. Then the Israelites said, "Explain how this wicked thing happened!" **4** The Levite, the husband of the murdered woman, spoke up, "I and my concubine stopped in Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin to spend the night. **5** The leaders of Gibeah attacked me and at night surrounded the house where I was staying.

They wanted to kill me; instead they abused my concubine so badly that she died. **6** I grabbed hold of my concubine and carved her up and sent the pieces throughout the territory occupied by Israel, because they committed such an unthinkable atrocity in Israel. **7** All you Israelites, make a decision here!"

8 All Israel rose up in unison and said, "Not one of us will go home! Not one of us will return to his house! **9** Now this is what we will do to Gibeah: We will attack the city as the lot dictates. **10** We will take ten of every group of a hundred men from all the tribes of Israel (and a hundred of every group of a thousand, and a thousand of every group of ten thousand) to get supplies for the army. When they arrive in Gibeah of Benjamin they will punish them for the atrocity which they committed in Israel." **11** So all the men of Israel gathered together at the city as allies.

12 The tribes of Israel sent men throughout the tribe of Benjamin, saying, "How could such a wicked thing take place? **13** Now, hand over the good-for-nothings in Gibeah so we can execute them and purge Israel of wickedness."

But the Benjaminites refused to listen to their Israelite brothers. **14** The Benjaminites came from their cities and assembled at Gibeah to make war against the Israelites.

15 That day the Benjaminites mustered from their cities twenty-six thousand sword-wielding soldiers, besides seven

hundred well-trained soldiers from Gibeah. **16**

Among this army were seven hundred specially-trained left-handed soldiers. Each one could sling a stone and hit even the smallest target. **17** The men of Israel (not counting Benjamin) had mustered four hundred thousand sword-wielding soldiers, every one an experienced warrior.

18 The Israelites went up to Bethel and asked God, "Who should lead the charge against the Benjaminites?"

The LORD said, "Judah should lead." **19** The Israelites got up the next morning and moved against Gibeah. **20** The men of Israel marched out to fight Benjamin; they arranged their battle lines against Gibeah. **21** The Benjaminites attacked from Gibeah and struck down twenty-two thousand Israelites that day.

22 The Israelite army took heart and once more arranged their battle lines, in the same place where they had taken their positions the day before. **23** The Israelites went up and wept before the LORD until evening. They asked the LORD, "Should we again march out to fight the Benjaminites, our brothers?" The LORD said, "Attack them!" **24** So the Israelites marched toward the Benjaminites the next day. **25** The Benjaminites again attacked them from Gibeah and struck down eighteen thousand sword-wielding Israelite soldiers.

26 So all the Israelites, the whole army, went up to Bethel. They wept and sat there before the LORD; they did not eat anything that day until evening. They offered up burnt sacrifices and tokens of peace to the LORD. **27** The Israelites asked the LORD (for the ark of God's covenant was there in those days; **28** Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, was serving the LORD in those days), "Should we once more march out to fight the Benjaminites our brothers, or should we quit?" The LORD said, "Attack, for tomorrow I will hand them over to you."

29 So Israel hid men in ambush outside Gibeah. **30** The Israelites attacked the Benjaminites the next day; they took

their positions against Gibeah just as they had done before.

31 The Benjaminites attacked the army, leaving the city unguarded. They began to strike down their enemy just as they had done before. On the main roads (one leads to Bethel, the other to Gibeah) and in the field, they struck down about thirty Israelites. **32** Then the Benjaminites said, "They are defeated just as before." But the Israelites said, "Let's retreat and lure them away from the city into the main roads." **33** All the men of Israel got up from their places and took their positions at Baal Tamar, while the Israelites hiding in ambush jumped out of their places west of Gibeah. **34** Ten thousand men, well-trained soldiers from all Israel, then made a frontal assault against Gibeah – the battle was fierce. But the Benjaminites did not realize that disaster was at their doorstep. **35** The LORD annihilated Benjamin before Israel; the Israelites struck down that day 25,100 sword-wielding Benjaminites. **36** Then the Benjaminites saw they were defeated.

The Israelites retreated before Benjamin, because they had confidence in the men they had hid in ambush outside Gibeah. **37** The men hiding in ambush made a mad dash to Gibeah. They attacked and put the sword to the entire city. **38** The Israelites and the men hiding in ambush had arranged a signal. When the men hiding in ambush sent up a smoke signal from the city, **39** the Israelites counterattacked. Benjamin had begun to strike down the Israelites; they struck down about thirty men. They said, "There's no doubt about it! They are totally defeated as in the earlier battle." **40** But when the signal, a pillar of smoke, began to rise up from the city, the Benjaminites turned around and saw the whole city going up in a cloud of smoke that rose high into the sky. **41** When the Israelites turned around, the Benjaminites panicked because they could see that disaster was on their doorstep. **42** They retreated before the Israelites, taking the road to the wilderness. But

the battle overtook them as men from the surrounding cities struck them down. **43**

They surrounded the Benjaminites, chased them from Nohah, and annihilated them all the way to a spot east of Geba. **44** Eighteen thousand Benjaminites, all of them capable warriors, fell dead. **45** The rest turned and ran toward the wilderness, heading toward the cliff of Rimmon. But the Israelites caught five thousand of them on the main roads. They stayed right on their heels all the way to Gidom and struck down two thousand more. **46**

That day twenty-five thousand sword-wielding Benjaminites fell in battle, all of them capable warriors. **47**

Six hundred survivors turned and ran away to the wilderness, to the cliff of Rimmon. They stayed there four months. **48** The Israelites returned to the Benjaminite towns and put the sword to them. They wiped out the cities, the animals, and everything they could find. They set fire to every city in their path.

1 The Israelites had taken an oath in Mizpah, saying, "Not one of us will allow his daughter to marry a Benjaminite."

Guzik - Judges 21:1-25

Judges 21 - Wives for the Remnant of Benjamin

A. A foolish oath.

1. (1) At Mizpah, a curse is laid on anyone who gives their daughter as wives for the tribe of Benjamin.

Now the men of Israel had sworn an oath at Mizpah, saying, "None of us shall give his daughter to Benjamin as a wife."

a. **None of us shall give his daughter to**

Benjamin: Considering their anger against Benjamin, this probably seemed like the right thing to do. But this foolish oath had unforeseen consequences. Justice not only brings punishment to evildoers, but it also guards against punishment that is too harsh.

2. (2-3) Israel realizes that a whole tribe is in danger of extinction.

Then the people came to the house of God, and remained there before God till evening. They lifted up their voices and wept bitterly, and said, "O LORD God of Israel, why has this come to pass in Israel, that today there should be one tribe *missing* in Israel?"

a. **Why has this come to pass in Israel, that today there should be one tribe missing in Israel?** They cried out to God, almost as if it was *His* responsibility that the tribe of Benjamin was on the edge of extinction.

The question, " **Why has this come to pass?** "

was easily answered: Because of the excessive vengeance of the tribes of Israel against the tribe of Benjamin.

b. **One tribe missing:** Down to almost only 400 men - and those unable to marry - the tribe of Benjamin was almost extinct.

B. Solutions to the problem of the foolish oath.

1. (4-15) Destroying the city of Jabesh Gilead and taking their young women.

So it was, on the next morning, that the people rose early and built an altar there, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. The children of Israel said, "Who *is there* among all the tribes of Israel who did not come up with the assembly to the LORD?" For they had made a great oath concerning anyone who had not come up to the LORD at Mizpah, saying, "He shall surely be put to death." And the children of Israel grieved for Benjamin their brother, and said, "One tribe is cut off from Israel today. What shall we do for wives for those who remain, seeing we have sworn by the LORD that we will not give them our daughters as wives?" And they said, "What one *is there* from the tribes of Israel who did not come up to Mizpah to the LORD?" And, in fact, no one had come to the camp from Jabesh Gilead to the assembly. For when the people were counted, indeed, not

one of the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead *was* there. So the congregation sent out there twelve thousand of their most valiant men, and commanded them, saying, "Go and strike the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead with the edge of the sword, including the women and children. And this *is* the thing that you shall do: You shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman who has known a man intimately." So they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead four hundred young virgins who had not known a man intimately; and they brought them to the camp at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan. Then the whole congregation sent *word* to the children of Benjamin who *were* at the rock of Rimmon, and announced peace to them. So Benjamin came back at that time, and they gave them the

women whom they had saved alive of the women of Jabesh Gilead; and yet they had not found enough for them. And the people grieved for Benjamin, because the LORD had made a void in the tribes of Israel.

a. Who is there among all the tribes of Israel who did not come up with the assembly to the LORD? . . . He shall surely be put to death: Here again Israel did something that seemed right at the time, but was actually a horror. They decided to slaughter a whole city of Israel, a city that refused to join with Israel in the fight against Benjamin.

i. This is doing one bad thing to make up for another. Israel instead should have repented of their foolish oath made at Mizpah, and they should have agreed to give their daughters as wives to the men of the tribe of Benjamin, renouncing the foolish vow of Jdg. 21:1.

b. They found among the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead four hundred young virgins: In the slaughter of Jabesh Gilead, they killed all but 400 young virgins. Still, this was not enough: **yet they had not found enough for them.**

2. (16-24) A ploy to give the Benjaminites an opportunity to take wives.

Then the elders of the congregation said, "What shall we do for wives for those who remain, since the women of Benjamin have been destroyed?"

And they said, "*There must be* an inheritance for the survivors of Benjamin, that a tribe may not be destroyed from Israel. However, we cannot give them wives from our daughters, for the children of Israel have sworn an oath, saying,

'Cursed *be* the one who gives a wife to Benjamin.'" Then they said, "In fact, *there is* a yearly feast of the LORD in Shiloh, which *is* north of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goes up from Bethel to Shechem, and south of Lebonah." Therefore they instructed the children of Benjamin, saying, "Go, lie in wait in the vineyards, and watch; and just when the daughters of Shiloh come out to perform their dances, then come out from the vineyards, and every man catch a wife for himself from the daughters of Shiloh; then go to the land of

Benjamin. Then it shall be, when their fathers or their brothers come to us to complain, that we will say to them, 'Be kind to them for our sakes, because we did not take a wife for any of them in the war; for *it is* not *as though* you have given the *women* to them at this time, making yourselves guilty of your oath.'" And the children of Benjamin did so; they took enough wives for their number from those who danced, whom they caught. Then they went and returned to their inheritance, and they rebuilt the cities and dwelt in them. So the children of Israel departed from there at that time, every man to his tribe and family; they went out from there, every man to his inheritance.

a. **Every man catch a wife for himself from the daughters of Shiloh:** They answered the problem of wives for the remaining Benjaminites by creating a little drama where the Benjaminites were allowed to "kidnap" women

(who were not doubt willing), so that the marriages could be arranged without "official" approval.

b. Rather than go through this charade, they should have simply confessed their sin of making a foolish oath and done the right

thing instead of trying to make two wrongs equal a right.

c. **Then they went and returned to their inheritance, and they rebuilt the cities and dwelt in them:** In this, the tribe of Benjamin was sufficiently restored to provide Israel with its first king (Saul).

3. (25) The summary observation of the times of Israel.

In those days *there was* no king in Israel; everyone did *what was* right in his own eyes.

a. **There was no king in Israel:** This kind of moral, political, social, and spiritual chaos could only happen where there was no recognized king over Israel - and where people forgot

about God as their King.

b. **Everyone did what was right in his own eyes:** Generally, the 400-year period of the Judges was marked by this radical individualism.

They rejected the standard of God's word and accepted the individual standard of **what was right** in their own eyes.

i. This is certainly the spirit of our age. We can think of this reflected in advertising slogans from our generation, within recent

memory: *Nothing is taboo . . . Break all the rules . . . To know no boundaries . . . Relax: No rules here . . . Peel off inhibitions. Find your own road . . . We are all hedonists and want to do what feels good. That's what makes us human . .*

. Living without boundaries . . . Just do it. The message is the same: "You make your own rules. You answer to no one. You are the one that matters. Your universe revolves around you."

ii. But the way of **right in his own eyes**

ends in ruin. Pro. 14:12 says it like this:

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. When man follows his own instincts and inclinations, it leads to ruin. We must follow God's way, not our own.

© 2003 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** So the people came to Bethel and sat there before God until evening, weeping loudly and uncontrollably. **3**

They said, "Why, O LORD God of Israel, has this happened in Israel?" An entire tribe has disappeared from Israel today!"

4 The next morning the people got up early and built an altar there. They offered up burnt sacrifices and token of peace. **5** The Israelites asked, "Who from all the Israelite tribes has not assembled before the LORD?" They had made a solemn oath that whoever did not assemble before the LORD at Mizpah must certainly be executed. **6** The Israelites regretted what had happened to their brother Benjamin. They said, "Today we cut off an entire tribe from Israel! **7** How can we find wives for those who are left? After all, we took an oath in the LORD's name not to give them our daughters as wives." **8** So they asked, "Who from all the Israelite tribes did not assemble before the LORD at Mizpah?" Now it just so happened no one from Jabesh Gilead had come to the gathering. **9** When they took roll call, they noticed none of the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead were there.

10 So the assembly sent 12,000

capable warriors against Jabesh Gilead. They commanded them, "Go and kill with your swords the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead, including the women and little children. **11**

Do this: exterminate every male, as well as every woman who has had sexual relations with a male. But spare the lives of any virgins." So they did as instructed. **12** They found among the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead four hundred young girls who were virgins – they had never had sexual relations

with a male. They brought them back to the camp at Shiloh in the land of Canaan.

13 The entire assembly sent messengers to the Benjaminites at the cliff of Rimmon and assured them they would not be harmed. **14** The Benjaminites returned at that time, and the Israelites gave to them the women they had spared from Jabesh Gilead. But there were not enough to go around.

15 The people regretted what had happened to Benjamin because the LORD had weakened the Israelite tribes. **16** The leaders of the assembly said, "How can we find wives for those who are left? After all, the Benjaminite women have been wiped out. **17** The remnant of Benjamin must be preserved. An entire Israelite tribe should not be wiped out. **18** But we can't allow our daughters to marry them, for the Israelites took an oath, saying, 'Whoever gives a woman to a Benjaminite will be destroyed!' **19**

However, there is an annual festival to the LORD in Shiloh, which is north of Bethel (east of the main road that goes up from Bethel to Shechem) and south of Lebonah." **20** So they commanded the Benjaminites, "Go hide in the vineyards, **21** and keep your eyes open. When you see the daughters of Shiloh coming out to dance in the celebration, jump out from the vineyards. Each one of you, catch yourself a wife from among the daughters of Shiloh and then go home to the land of Benjamin. **22** When their fathers or brothers come and protest to us, we'll say to them, "Do us a favor and let them be, for we could not get each one a wife through battle. Don't worry about breaking your oath! You would only be guilty if you had voluntarily given them wives.'"

23 The Benjaminites did as instructed. They abducted two hundred of the dancing girls to be their wives. They went home to their own territory, rebuilt their cities, and settled down. **24** Then the Israelites dispersed from there to their respective tribal and clan territories. Each went from there to

his own property. **25** In those days Israel had no king. Each man did what he considered to be right.